

# THE STUDENT WORLD

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UT OMNES UNUM SINT

The Significance of Jesus Christ

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THIRD QUARTER 1935



# THE STUDENT WORLD

Serial Number 110

## The Significance of Jesus Christ

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*The Student World* is published in January, April, July and October. The price of a single annual subscription, post paid, is 5s.; 4.00 marks; 5.00 Swiss francs; \$1.50. Single Copies 2s.; 1.20 marks; 1.50 Swiss francs; \$0.50. Subscriptions may be sent to any of the addresses given below:

Australia :	Student Christian Movement, 182 Collins Street, Melbourne.
Canada :	Student Christian Movement, 1164 Bay Street, Toronto 5.
China :	Kiang Wen Han, 131 Museum Road, Shanghai.
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U.S.A. :	Student Y.M.C.A., 347 Madison Avenue, New York City.. Student Y.W.C.A., 600 Lexington Avenue, New York City

or to the general office of the World's Student Christian Federation, 13 rue Calvin, Geneva, Switzerland (Chèque Postal No. 13192).

The names of the various national and international student movements affiliated to the Federation and also the addresses to which correspondence should be sent are printed on the third page of this cover.

# THE STUDENT WORLD

A quarterly magazine published at 13 Rue Calvin, Geneva  
by the World's Student Christian Federation

Dr. W. A. VISSER 't HOOFT *Editor*

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VOLUME XXIX

Third Quarter, 1935

NUMBER 3

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## EDITORIAL

### Jesus Christ our Contemporary

*There are many ways of avoiding a real meeting with Jesus Christ. The one is to think of Him as belonging to "history"; the other to consider Him as belonging to "theology". In neither case can there be any real confrontation, for neither a historical personality nor a theological conception is a living and personal reality.*

*It is, therefore, a tragic misunderstanding if it is believed that these two ways of conceiving of Jesus Christ are the only possible ones, and that those who would know Him must choose between these avenues of approach. Is it not due to this misunderstanding, which has been created by the controversies of many decades, that students often find it so hard to enter into living contact with Him?*

*The contribution which this number of The Student World would make to the understanding of Jesus Christ is simply to show that there is another possibility: tertium datur. While it is true that Jesus Christ as a historical person is to be studied historically, and that theology has a perfect right to attempt a formulation of His significance for men, He does not "belong" to history or to theology. For He is a present and personal reality. We need not be content with "the religion of Christ"*



or a "religion about Christ". Our religion can be the religion of meeting Him and living with Him.

How can this be? Those who seek for an intellectual explanation of this fact will be disappointed in the following articles. For they do not explain. They affirm. They state the fact that this man is our everlasting and ever-present contemporary. And they invite us all to find out for ourselves whether this is not true.

But if they do not explain, they give us at least some indication as to the kind of meeting which we should expect. They tell us that we shall not be confronted by one who, through his obvious exterior qualities, is going to take us by storm. They rather warn us that we will be offended, not once but again and again, and that only if we can stand the offence will we find out Who He is.

They also tell us that this meeting cannot take place as a mere polite making of acquaintance without further consequences. It means of necessity interference with our lives. And more than that, since He is to be met either as Lord or not at all, it means a change of government in our personal domain; for just as it is impossible to serve two Masters at the same time, so it is also impossible to live with a Master and to continue to rule one's own life.

Meeting this contemporary is therefore a risky matter. We must consider seriously whether it would not be better for us to stick to the historical or theological conceptions than to meet the living Christ Himself. But perhaps — since confrontation involves two persons — He is going to decide for us, and we shall suddenly find Him coming towards us, asking: "Who say ye that I am?" May God give that we may answer Him then, not with clever historical or theological formulae, but with our life itself.

V. 'T H.

## Certitudo and Securitas

JULIUS SCHNIEWIND

The title of this essay names two words which are of special significance for Luther. But the essay will not be a contribution to the study of Luther's theology, in which its author is not a specialist. The subject was given him by Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft because the words *certitudo* and *securitas* were used, during a debate at the European Theological Students' Conference at York, to describe certain definite realities in the Christian life and Christian theology. It is of these realities that our essay is to treat ; for the Latin expressions from Luther's vocabulary serve to describe things which are of the most immediate concern to us at the present day.

### *Luther's Conception of Certainty.*

The Reformers again and again called the thing which was given to them anew : *certitudo salutis*, *certainty of salvation*. Faith is so certain of salvation " that it would die a thousand times on its account. " Faith is certain " that it has a Gracious God. " " I am *certain* ", Luther translates Romans viii. 38, " that neither death nor life,... nor things present nor things to come... shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. "

Certainty stands in contrast with *uncertainty* (*incertitudo*). Luther knew that from the time of his struggles in the monastery. That a God existed, he had never for a moment doubted. But his struggle was concerned with the question whether God's Grace applied to him. He knew already from the tradition of the Roman Church that God lays claim to our whole heart and life. This is the First Commandment : to fear, to love and to trust God above all things. Luther discovered that we do not keep the First Command-



ment; that our love to God is never undivided and pure; that in everything — in even our greatest devotion, our most self-sacrificing charity, — we are seeking, loving, honouring ourselves, seeking our own salvation, our own fortune, our own blessedness; that we are estranged and turned away from God (*abalienati, aversi a Deo*); that all our attempts to alter ourselves at this decisive point lead us only to the discovery that we *cannot* fear and love God (*Deum non posse timere vel diligere*); that in the depths of our hearts we wish there were no God, or rather, wish we ourselves were God (*velle Deum non esse, immo velle se ipsum esse Deum*); that we are enemies of God, and hate Him (*osorem Dei esse*). — A nineteenth-century theologian, Hermann Cremer, called this uncertainty *certainly of damnation*<sup>1</sup>. This expression, though it does not occur in the works of the Reformers, corresponds exactly with that which they all describe. We are estranged and sundered from Eternal God. The Reformers make this confession with the Biblical expressions: wrath of God, curse, hell, eternal destruction. And Luther experiences, all his life through, tribulations (*temptationes*) in which the gracious God entirely disappears from him, in which his terrified conscience (*concussa conscientia*) accuses him, in which God's Commandment, God's holy Law condemns him.

From this uncertainty God Himself saves us. God Himself loves His enemies. He sends His Son into our destruction, into our temptations, our curse, our death, into the utmost estrangement from God. Luther again and again described the Work of Christ by the Word from the Cross which *Mark* and *Matthew* record: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But Christ has conquered:

*"Es war ein wunderlich Krieg,  
Da Tod und Leben rungen.  
Das Leben behielt den Sieg,  
Es hat den Tod verschlungen."*

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<sup>1</sup> An untranslatable play upon words. Luther's word *Heilsgewissheit* = certainty of salvation. Cremer's word *Unheilsgewissheit* = certainty of the reverse of salvation.

(“ *There was the strangest affray,  
Where Death and Life were warring;  
But Life has carried the day,  
Death’s sling and power devouring.*”)

That this victory of Christ applies to us also, He Himself promises us again and again, in the comfortable words of the Gospel promise, which is given us “ free and for nothing ”, (*gratuita promissio evangelii*).

“ *Er sprach zu mir: Halt dich an Mich,  
Es soll dir jetzt gelingen.  
Ich geb Mich selber ganz für dich,  
Da will Ich für dich ringen.  
Denn Ich bin dein und du bist Mein,  
Und wo Ich bleib, da sollst du sein,  
Uns soll der Feind nicht scheiden.* ”

(“ *He said to me: Hold close to Me;  
Success thee is attending.  
I give Myself away for thee,  
For thee I am contending.  
For I am thine, and thou art Mine,  
And My own dwelling shall be thine;  
The foe shall ne’er bring parting.* ”)

The *certainty of salvation* is, then, the certainty that God loves us, who do not love Him. This certainty Luther calls: faith, simple trust (*fides, nuda fiducia*). In this certainty, however, the First Commandment of God is fulfilled (*fides est impletio primi praecepti*). To be loved by God means: to learn to love God! For to love God means: to let oneself be loved by God. But by fulfilling the First Commandment, Luther maintains, we fulfil all the Commandments. Here, however, we touch upon far-reaching trains of thought, which can become clear only at the end of our essay.

### *The Modern Uncertainty.*

Our first task must be to contrast what has been said



with our present-day thought. The opinion has often been expressed that the Reformers' way of putting the question has become quite strange to us. We ask, it is said, no longer for certainty of salvation, but for *certainly of God*. We ask whether there be a God, what we can say of Him, and how we can establish such a certainty of God.

But this statement of the question is false. In reality there are no atheists, and there never have been any. The atheist denies only the word "God", or particular representations of God. But no atheist can rid himself of what Schleiermacher called "the consciousness of absolute dependence." He only replaces the word "God" by other words: fate, eternal law, infinity, eternity, world-reason. Yet all that merely describes the fact that we are not the rulers of our life, but "absolutely dependent." But He on Whom we are dependent is strange to us and distant from us: the "Unknown God." Every attempt to deny Him *theoretically* is in fact only the attempt to master the uncertainty of our *personal life*. This uncertainty is due to the fact that *we know of the existence of God, but are estranged and sundered from Him*.

That, however, brings us very close to the way in which the Reformation puts the question. We are in the position of the heathen audience to whom St. Paul spoke (*Acts* xiv. and xvii.; *Romans* i. and ii.). St. Paul assumes that they know of the existence of God; but he knows better than they themselves how it stands with them: God's Commandment, God's Law, God's Judgment is upon them.

But the objection of "modern thought" is directed against just this proclamation of the Bible and of the Reformers. It is stated that the Word of the Judgment of God is only an expression of our inferiority complex. The attempt is made to explain Luther and St. Paul psychologically. In so doing it is forgotten that the harshest words on the Judgment of God stand in the words of Jesus in the Gospels. It is also forgotten that *all* the religions of the world know of an eternal responsibility, which becomes more and more serious according as more is known of God and His Commandment, and as the *one* question: "Am I far from God, or is



He gracious towards me ? ” comes more clearly into prominence.

That is the question for us too. The question of certainty is *a question of the personal life*. Even between human persons, this question of certainty exists : are we foes or friends ? are we at one, or are we separated ? is it love or hate that determines our relationship ? Either — or ; yes or no. Where human beings belong together, that is based on the fact that the one is *certain* of the other. I am certain that my father, my friend, my wife love me ; I can trust them, they can trust me ; nothing “ stands between us ” ; we are not strange to, or far away from, one another.

Not otherwise is the relation between God and us. Either — or ; yes or no ; love or hate ; friend or foe. But God has loved us, His enemies. He has kept faith with us, the unfaithful. He has turned to those who have turned from Him. That is what the Reformers call “ Grace ”, (*favor*), clemency. And God promises us that ; just as trust and certainty arise among us men through a word, — a word of promise and of loyalty, — so does our certainty of God’s Grace arise through His Gospel, His friendly Promise — *gratuita promissio evangelii*.

### *The Confusion of Certainty and Security.*

We however confuse certainty and security, certitudo and securitas.

“ Certainty ” means a relationship between persons, between living human beings, between us men and the living God (*theos zôn*). “ Security ” or “ surety ” means that things and objects are reliable. A technical structure must offer a guarantee of security ; we speak of “ offering surety ” for money loans, of life “ assurance ” and fire “ assurance ”, which are just other forms of the same word. The usage is similar in all modern languages.

And so we try to make our relation to God a “ security ” of this kind. God is then like a thing, an object, like some thing that is a matter of course. There is no more question of the Either — or of salvation or damnation ; we have taken

possession of God, become His master, got Him into our power.

Luther warns us again and again with the utmost solemnity against *securitas*. We are "sure" that everything is in good order between us and God; we are insolent and proud, and think that "nothing can hurt us now", that God's Judgment can never fall upon us again, that His Grace can never be lost to us. A hymn from Reformation times expresses it thus :

*" Herr Jesu hilf, Dein Kirch erhalt,  
Wir sind gar sicher, träg und kall. "*

*(" Lord Jesus, help, Thy Church uphold ;  
We are so sure, so dull and cold. ")*

The very Church especially, as an institution, establishment, order, has at all times been in the greatest danger of guarding "dead securities", instead of awakening living certainty of the Grace of the living God through the living Word of the Gospel (*viva vox evangelii*). And each individual by himself is in the greatest danger of making out of everything that God gives him a security, an object, a thing, upon which he "relies". The Bible, from the prophets to the Apostles, is one long warning against this danger; Jesus' life-struggle, the struggle with the Pharisees, is one long warning against this danger, — a danger which is so great just because it is really God's own gifts upon which our evil security grows. The Bible speaks of "justifying oneself", of "trusting in one's own works", of one's "own glory" — and yet it was God alone who gave us everything, the work, the success and the joy. Luther can express it thus : that in everything given us by God, even in our good works, in our prayers, in the proclamation of the Gospel, we say in our hearts : *hoc ego feci* ; I have done this. And so we rely upon our "work", our customs and regulations ; or, in modern terms, upon our piety, our devoutness, our self-education, our ethical development — and forget, as we do so, the living God.

For the matter stands thus, as Luther often said ; *the*



more I am sure, securus, the less am I certain, certus. The more I rely on myself, on my piety, on my habits, regulations and customs, the more does God vanish from me. For I am relying on myself, I am loving myself, in all my very piety; and so I am not loving and trusting God above all things; I am transgressing His First, His Only Commandment.

But God does not give us over to ourselves; for if He did, we should be lost. He calls us ever anew out of our security. He calls us through His Commandment, His Law, His Judgment which condemns us; *facit opus alienum, ut faciat opus suum* ("He does a strange work, in order to be able to do His own work"): He condemns us in order to lead us to Christ. God's Law, Luther asserts, stands over us every day and every hour. We do not believe what our condition really is; but God's Law says to us ever anew that we ought to love Him above all things, but in fact do not love Him; that before Him we are "lost and damned beings", beings, however, whom Jesus Christ "has redeemed, bought, won, from all sins, from death and from the power of the Devil". The Law condemns us in order to lead us to Christ: *Deus facit opus alienum, ut faciat opus suum*.

But now the Law has been caught up into the Gospel. The Gospel includes the Law in itself. Judgment upon us is pronounced simply in the fact that Christ died for us. Luther makes Christ say:

*"Hättst du dir selbst was konnt erwerben,  
Wozu musst Ich für dich dann sterben?"*

*("Wert thou thyself thy needs supplying,  
Why then must I for thee be dying?")*

And what Christ's Death means for us is promised to each individual in his baptism. There it is proclaimed over us as God's Judgment, that our own life, centred on itself and parted from God, is given up to death, sunk as in a flood. And Luther further asserts, that we may "daily" place our "old Adam" under this judgment of God, that

we ought ever anew to "creep under our baptism", dead with Christ, with Christ alive.

So, then, this proposition is valid : *the more I am certain, the less I am secure*. The more I am certain of what God did for me, the less do I rely upon myself, upon my own powers, works, achievements and gifts.

*Certitudo* and *securitas* are thus like two communicating tubes : the more the water rises in the one, the more it sinks in the other. The more *certitudo*, the less *securitas* ; the more *securitas*, the less *certitudo*.

### *Living Certainty: Trust in the Living God.*

Is what has been said difficult to understand ? Perhaps Luther's thoughts about the Law and its task, about our condemnation, about baptism seem very remote ? They have for a long time been forgotten, even in Luther's own Church.

And yet, we have once again the analogy of our human life. Every relationship of men with one another is in continual danger of falling into *securitas* and so being paralysed. As soon as the relationship of two human beings comes to derive its life, no longer from trust and certainty, but only from the exterior order of habit, custom and form, it is in danger of dying, and often some small occasion is all that is needed to reveal how love has turned to hate, trust into mistrust and embitterment. The collapse of marriages and families, of loyalty, of social relationships speaks eloquently. Every human relationship calls for cultivation. It consists only in living trust and living certainty ; and this always includes the solicitude which fears to injure the other's trust, lest it may so be lost.

Our trust in the living God is of the right kind only when it is upheld by *fear*, — the fear of breaking troth with Him, the fear of "falling from His grace." The Bible is full of such "fear of God" ; not only the Old Testament but also the New, Jesus' Words (Mt. x. 28 ; v. 29 f.) as well as St. Paul's (II Cor. v. 11 ; I Cor. ix. 23, 27) ; and Luther can tell how even the greatest saints did their best works only in



fear of losing grace (*amissio gratiae*), of throwing away God's eternal salvation.

From such fear of God there arises a quite definite *attitude to life*. When we fear and love God, every good thing happens, as Luther says, "free for nothing", "without compulsion". Where God is present, nothing evil happens. Where the First Commandment is kept, all are kept. Therefore Luther begins his exposition of all the Commandments by calling to remembrance the interpretation of the First Commandment: "We are to fear and love God, *that we...*"; and with that, all human relationships take form: "... that we may neither despise nor enrage our parents and masters, but hold them in honour..."; that we may not encroach upon the life, the marriage, the property, the honour of our neighbour; that we may know, in all these relationships, that God, has placed us in them and is watching over them. Only the one thing is needful: that we fulfil the First Commandment!

To describe how that comes about is the real content of all Luther's literary work; indeed, it is the ultimate content of the whole Bible. It can be described from the standpoint of the "Yes" which we call *certitudo*; it can be said with the "No" which condemns all *securitas*. In the "Yes" the "No" is contained. And to the extent to which that "Yes", the Work of Christ, dawns anew upon our preaching and theology, to that extent the "No" also will become comprehensible.

### *Security and Certainty in Preaching and Theology.*

In York the words *certitudo* and *securitas* came up in a discussion on Biblical criticism. The results which we have now arrived at have in fact also a definite *significance for our Christian preaching and theology*.

When *Christian preaching* falls a victim to *securitas*, it gives itself up. Every sermon which sees its salvation in method, technique, organisation and apparatus, or in a fixed traditional form, or in the search for new forms, or in established orthodox doctrine, is in danger of speaking no

longer about God, but about dead, human things. It may be that we think that God may be taken as a matter of course, that we are "sure" of Him, that it only depends on our powers, our methods and arrangements. And we have no right to be surprised if preaching which proceeds thus produces no certainty of salvation, no faith, no trust in the living God. For we ourselves do not possess this *certitudo* at all. Or perhaps we once possessed it and then lost it, and are now exhausting ourselves in "assurances" and "securities." But with every new day we are in danger of losing *certitudo*, and then we sink inevitably into some kind of *securitas*; no life can last without some support, and the only question is where we look for one — in God, or in ourselves and our works and things. There is granted to us the *facultas standi extra nos coram Deo*, the possibility, the permission to stand outside ourselves before God. This *facultas*, however, is given to us only in the promise of the Gospel, every day anew; and only to the extent to which we ourselves listen to the Gospel, and ourselves grasp the *certitudo* anew, shall we be able to convey the Gospel to others too.

What is true of preaching is just as true of theology. There is a theology of security in several varieties. It is present wherever Christianity and the Christian life are regarded as something which in the last resort is a matter of course, in which everything "stands to reason."

That may be so in an orthodox theology which is chiefly concerned that we hold something, a dogma, the Bible, to be true. This dogma may be the very one of which we are speaking here, the doctrine of the justification of the sinner before God, the doctrine of the Work of Christ. But so soon as the dogma is something else than the doctrinal form of the living Word of God, it becomes a dead thing, upon which we rely, remaining, while we do so, just as we were. The Reformers used to issue repeated warnings against a dead faith, a faith *in genere*, in general; true faith is rather *fides specialis*, the special faith, described in the *Heidelberg Catechism*, that forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation are granted "not only to others, but also to me." A theology



which can even for a moment forget this *fides specialis*, even if it be only as it concerns some remote dogma, is a theology of *securitas*.

The same danger, however, threatens many a "modern" theology or philosophy. There is in the newer theology and philosophy a kind of talk about "risk", about "removing safeguards", whose result is none the less a new *securitas*; for it is possible to be very proud of "breaking down all safeguards". But often this happens when a theologian or philosopher provisionally takes no account of Christ, and places man as it were in empty space; it may happen even in the form of a complete denial of, and attack upon, the Christian faith, which consciously teaches man reliance upon himself, upon his daring and fighting, his heroic and tragical conquering and perishing. In both cases a new security is created. Man tries, at least provisionally, at any rate as long as possible, to stand on his own feet. This is always a self-deception. One cannot speak *first of all* about "despair" or "collapse" or "the relativity of everything", and hope that one is by that means leading one's hearers to Christ. The hearer necessarily understands it in such a way as to admire himself in his despair, and be pleased with himself in his relativism. The tragically heroic attitude of the ancients is much more firm and determined; the Greek says: "Many things there are which are mighty; but nothing is mightier than man". But all that is nothing but an attempt to evade the question of God, an attempt to secure oneself against God. And the ancient, since he still knows of "fate" and its power, is more honourable than the modern, who would like to pass by faith in God with a sceptical shrug of the shoulders, and so inevitably falls victim to a moral relativism which is worse than heathenism.

The most widespread and older form of "modern" theology and philosophy is also a theology of *securitas*. It forbids any definite assertion about God; for God is the Inapprehensible, the Infinite, the Incomprehensible, the ultimate Pure Being, the *ens realissimum*, the *theion*, "the Divine", the *divinum*. It is significant that the

neuter is used here in Greek, Latin and German (*das Göttliche*). By means of this procedure, man has made God into a thing, into an object. He is also treated as an object : we men give Him His Name, even if He be called only "the Nameless One" ; we men coin symbols for Him, in philosophy, music, poetry, graphic and plastic art, and we admire ourselves in our piety and power of constructing symbols ; and then all that the Bible and the Church say becomes a mere symbol too. God is no longer our Judge, nor is He our Saviour : for these, after all, it is said, are mere human expressions. So we have brought ourselves into security before God. But we have also consciously denied all certainty. — Only we can really never fully succeed in both. All the expressions named above are actually only an open question, the question as to the One, of Whose existence we know, and from Whom we are yet widely separated. We know of the question of the Either — or, of the Yes or No ; we have the "certainty of damnation", of being far from God ; but we try to secure ourselves against this question by giving out the very questioning itself as the final answer.

It should be the task of theology to return to the Reformation. And much that has happened in the last decades shows that we are thinking of this return. In the Christian community the preaching of the Reformation has never been forgotten. The question as to the *certitudo salutis* has never become quite silent. Calvinism and Pietism in all their forms have always kept this question alive, and stated it anew. Yet there exists the danger that, if we do not find the right answer, our questioning ceases, or that we silence it with some *securitas*.

### *Security and Certainty in the light of Biblical Criticism.*

But has not Biblical criticism relativised the message of the Reformation for us ? That is the last problem which must occupy us. It was of this problem that we spoke at York. What the Reformation said is meant to be simply exposition of the Bible. But has not everything that the Gospels report about Jesus become uncertain ? Is not



everything that St. Paul and the other Apostles proclaim only a variety of ancient piety which is entirely foreign to us ?

But the main thesis which we are pursuing gives us the answer to this final problem also. Certainly everything that seemed "secure" has been made in-secure through historical research. But just by reason of that we stand before the proclamation of the Gospels and of the Apostles exactly as the first hearers themselves stood. They too had no kind of sureties that the Message, the Gospel, was true. But the Message bore witness to itself as "the Word of God" (I Thess. ii. 13), as a message of joy (*eu-angelion* !) of grace, of eternal salvation (*euangelion charitos, sôlerias*).

The Church has from time immemorial sought to make the content of the Bible secure against all objections. The late Judaistic and Hellenistic dogma of inspiration was taken over. Then there immediately arose the difficulty that the accounts given in the Gospels do not coincide at every point, but overlap or contradict each other. Refuge was sought in the construction of a *Harmony of the Gospels*; from the second century right up to the nineteenth, and even the twentieth, such Harmonies of the Gospels have been used. The sections of all four Gospels are fitted together as well as possible; anything told in different ways is reproduced in duplicate. But even when critical observation awoke from the eighteenth century onwards, the way that was taken remained in principle the same. The attempt was made, through source-criticism and historical investigations of every kind, to determine what was indubitable and secure. The authority of historical research must take the place of the dogma of inspiration! Research was to determine which of Jesus' Words were genuine and therefore obligatory and redemptive for us. Up to the most recent times, historical criticism has had such a good opinion of itself. But if Jesus is really the only Way to God, then historical research, with all its relativism, can never be the leader to point us to this Way. And as a matter of fact historical criticism has never done so either. It has only shown negatively that we can determine very little with historical security

as regards the form in which, or the occasion upon which, Jesus spoke a given Word, or as regards whether and how a given Event occurred. And it has shown positively how the tradition of the Words and Events in the Life of Jesus as the Son of God was in every case transmitted in the first Christian community as a definite sermon, a definite sermon, a definite witness *Kerugma*, *marlurion*, in a way no different from that in which St. Paul transmits his sermons and his witness in his Epistles. And the only question is : whether the first Christian community deceived itself when it says, in Gospels and Epistles, in report and proclamation, that Jesus of Nazareth, the Despised and Rejected of man, the Crucified, is the Lord, the King, the Saviour. To this question answer is given, not by any historical criticism, but, then as now, only by faith. And if historical criticism is debarring us from all the questions of curiosity, it is only forcing us to pay all the more attention to the *one* question which is put to us in reality by the New Testament.

But has not research into the history of religion shaken all our certainty ? Even it has only restored us to the position of the first hearers of the Message. For them, Jesus was in the first instance a Rabbi like any other. Who noticed the plenary authority (*exousia*) of His Word ? a Word such as no prophet ever spoke ; a Word in which God's " world to come " becomes a present reality ? The more exactly we come to know the Judaism of those days, the clearer does it become that the new element in the Message of Jesus is not any kind of new intellectual content, but He Himself as a Person. But who perceives from Jesus' Words what He is ? — It is nowise different with St. Paul. He is in the first place just a wandering missionary for his hearers, one among the many that there were in all the religions and philosophies of those days. Did not what he said sound like the word of a mystagogue or a Stoic or a Hellenistic Rabbi ? But the decisive thing was an offence for all his hearers ; the fact that all the holy words which they all knew already (Lord, Saviour, Son of God) are now given reference to Jesus the Crucified One ; that the answer to all their questioning (which St. Paul takes up just as it comes



from them) after eternal salvation, Life and Light, is said to be Jesus the Crucified and Risen One !

The first hearers of the New Testament stood before the Word of the Message in such a way that no security or assurance was offered them. We know how the enemies of Jesus reviled Him, how the opponents of St. Paul laughed him to scorn. But the Gospel bears witness to itself. The Bible calls that witness " the Spirit of God ", the immediate Presence of God. The Bible confronts us in exactly the same way. Here comes a Word with plenary authority. Who hears that God is speaking here ? that here the Living God is coming to us ?

*" Fragst du, wer der ist ?  
Er heisst Jesus Christ,  
Der Herr Zebaoth. "*

*(" And who is this same ?  
Christ Jesus His Name,  
The Lord Sabaoth. ")*

The question of the *certitudo salutis* is everywhere and always the same. The temptation to pervert the *certitudo* into *securitas* is always the same. But God Himself keeps the questioning alive ; God Himself causes us to apprehend His Word, His Gospel.

## The Significance of Jesus for our Conception of God

FRANCIS P. MILLER

I am not competent to discuss this question from the standpoint of its historical development, or from the standpoint of the various contemporary schools of thought. The only thing I can do is to give a personal answer to the question : " What is the significance of Jesus for my conception of Ultimate Reality ? "

For me, Jesus defines Ultimate Reality. He defines it, not theoretically but actually, in terms of life and death, and in terms of the New Society which sprang from belief in His Resurrection. The primary object of this paper is neither to discuss *why* Jesus defines Ultimate Reality, nor to consider *how* He defines it, but rather to consider what the definition *is* which He gives. My conviction is that if men stand in the presence of the Ultimate and Eternal Reality which Jesus defines, they will be driven to the conclusion that His definition is true, and they will discover that their conclusion will be confirmed by the logic of their minds as well as by the response of their hearts and their wills.

When I affirm that Jesus defines Ultimate Reality, I do not mean this affirmation in the sense of the formula " God is like Jesus " ; because the likeness of the Christian God is defined both by Jesus and by what happened to Jesus, both by " the days of His flesh " and by the days that followed after the days of His flesh.

In other words, the definition which Jesus gives is a far more comprehensive definition than any which could be derived from even a complete record of His life between birth and execution, were that available. As a matter of fact, the particular events which occasioned the rise of the Christian Movement, and which inspired its mission, were events which occurred after Jesus' death. And it is only



when the events of His life are viewed in the light of these *post-mortem* events that the full significance of Jesus for our conception of Ultimate Reality can be appreciated.

An organic view of reality is essentially alien to the modern mind. We have been trained by the discipline of the scientific method to isolate facts, and to treat them as if they possessed the property of "simple location", to use Whitehead's phrase. This predilection has greatly influenced our mental picture of Jesus. His full length portrait has been replaced by a crudely truncated cartoon. To treat any person, but particularly Jesus, as if He possessed the property of "simple location", is to distort the meaning of personal life to such an extent as to render one's conclusions wholly unreliable. The fact is that the life of Jesus is organically related to, and hence in unbroken continuity with, the events and movements which were the consequences of His life.

The definition of Ultimate Reality which I shall try to sketch is based on the assumption that the life of Jesus, religiously speaking, cannot be understood as an isolated historical incident, but that His life derives its deepest meaning from its organic connection with the lives of His contemporaries, and also with the lives of those who came after Him, including our own.

In asserting that Jesus defines God, I do not mean to suggest that He defines Him either in totality or in detail. His definition is a general definition of the essence of Ultimate Reality. It is an answer to the question: "What in essence is the relation between God and man, and what is God's Will for man?"

What then are the data that supply the definition which Jesus gives of Ultimate Reality? These data include:

The religious history of the Jews leading up to Jesus.  
The life and faith of Jesus.

The death of Jesus (viewed both from the standpoint of Jesus and from the standpoint of the society which destroyed Him).

The belief that He rose again.

The New Society which grew out of that belief.

In this sense, Christianity is not the religion of Jesus, nor the religion about Jesus, but the religion created by men's worship of the Reality revealed throughout the drama of which Jesus was and is the central figure. What is the character of Ultimate Reality, as defined by the data supplied by this drama ?

These data define Ultimate Reality in terms of "*Thou*" — of the *Thou* who Creates, of the *Thou* who Judges, of the *Thou* who Loves, and of the *Thou* who accepts the full responsibility for and consequences of His Creation, His Judgment and His Love. I purposely refrain from defining Ultimate Reality as "personal", because the word "personal" has become so individualised in our Protestant vocabulary as to be incapable of conveying the concept of God contained in the New Testament. There is an advantage in using the simplest possible term to describe the One who is both "other" and "in relation to me", the Creator and Sustainer of all things, visible and invisible, and the One in whom I live and move and have my being.

In a day when impersonal concepts (concepts of values, systems, processes, integrations, masses, machines, etc.) dominate thought and action — when men worship an *It* rather than a *Thou*, this Christian affirmation has momentous consequences for our view of nature, of man and of human society.

The essence of the Ultimate Reality that is revealed to us in the Christian drama is, that Jesus not only thought of Himself as living in responsible relationship to a *Thou*, Whom he called "His Father in Heaven", but believed Himself to be an Act of this *Thou*. If we think of Jesus as an Act of Ultimate Reality, then what He was, what His unbelieving contemporaries thought about Him and did to Him, and what His disciples believed and did, must all be taken into account in trying to understand the Nature of God, and the relation between God and His Creation and particularly between God and man.

These data contain the assumption that the *Thou* expresses Himself through a Reign or a Realm. This Reign or Realm defines the grain of the Universe, sets bounds to personal



and social destiny, and gives the decisive "yes" and "no" to history. From the standpoint of humanity, this Reign of God is the social structure of Ultimate Reality, with which men have to deal every moment of their lives. In one way or another they are continually accepting it or rejecting it. They either associate themselves with it or rebel against it. The lives of most of us are a curious amalgam of fealty and treason. In so far as we ignore or deny the Reign, there is death. They that take the sword shall perish by the sword. But in so far as we seek first the Reign of God, and submit to its Sovereignty, there is fulness of life. The Christian accepts the Reign of God as the creative and redemptive Movement of Ultimate Reality in the Time Stream. He accepts it humbly, as a penitent who stands under the Judgment of God, but at the same time he accepts it with joy, as a citizen of the Realm, who has a chance to participate in the realisation of God's eternal Purpose.

It seems to me that the thought of our American liberal Protestantism is weakest at this point. We have believed in freedom — freedom to do good, with unlimited material blessings as the reward of virtue, and freedom to do evil, with no really serious consequences at all, since God is a kind and indulgent Father.

From the standpoint of the relative and the temporal, there is obviously a margin of freedom (a much narrower margin than we have been accustomed to suppose); but from the perspective of the Absolute and the Eternal, what we usually call freedom (freedom in the sense of *self-expression*) loses its meaning, since every free movement away from the purposes of Ultimate Reality is a movement towards bondage and death. At the same time, those whose lives are identified with the purposes of Ultimate Reality discover that they achieve the only true freedom by renouncing their own claim to freedom. They pass from death into life as they serve Him "in whose service is perfect freedom."

I sometimes think that the Communists are going to teach us more truth about the relation between Ultimate Reality and history than our own theologians. However

erroneous the theory of economic determinism may be, it represents a much closer approximation to truth than anyone can achieve who, in the pride of his modernism, has thrown overboard, as superfluous baggage, such antiquated concepts as those which deal with the sovereignty of God or with the doctrine of predestination.

Perhaps the time is coming when we may begin to understand a little of what Jesus meant when He said :

“ Unless you submit to the Reign of God like a little child, you will never get into it at all. ”

“ The Reign of God is not coming as you hope to catch sight of it. . . for the Reign of God is now in your midst.”

Of equal significance for our concept of Ultimate Reality is the tension, revealed in these data, between the Realm of God and the realm of man. Here again an essential Christian truth remains practically incomprehensible to the modern intellect. The very fibre of our minds has been coloured by our belief in progress, and in many unconscious ways we tend to identify the best in contemporary civilisation with the fulfilment or completion of the Reign of God.

Though as individuals we may imagine that we are emancipated from such superficial opinions, the fact remains that the chasm which the New Testament portrays between the ways of God and the ways of man is far deeper and wider than many of us find it possible to admit.

This chasm is the scandal of the Christian faith ! It is perhaps an even greater scandal for us, enmeshed as we are in what Tillich calls the self-sufficient finitude of our scientific age, than it was for the Greeks in the first century. Yet the data which we are examining show immediate actuality and Ultimate Reality in continual conflict, the relative against the Absolute, the temporal against the Eternal, selfish greed against Love, man against God : and the end of that conflict is the Cross.

I do not suppose that this conflict will ever be resolved in Time. Wherever Ultimate Reality articulates itself clearly, whether in the first century or in the twentieth,



there is the same utter antithesis between God's Will and Man's Will as that which is revealed in Jesus' relations with contemporaries. The corollary of this is that, wherever a consciousness of this antithesis does not exist, the God whom men are worshipping is almost certainly not the God of the New Testament.

In the Christian drama, a moment came when it appeared that self-sufficient finitude had triumphed over Ultimate and Eternal Reality. Human society had declared war on Divine society, and won the victory. The cross is the symbol of God's destruction at the hands of men.

But the supreme paradox of the Christian faith is that the Cross had, from the standpoint of Ultimate Reality, very different consequences from those which the highest human intelligence could have anticipated. Humanly speaking, it was final evidence of an exploded myth. It shortly came to be a symbol of the redemptive Love of the Living God.

Jesus was dead. The end had come to all the hopes which He had aroused. Then to a few men and women there came the conviction that His death on the Cross was not the end of His life. They became aware of His continued existence : an existence very different from the existence of the days of His flesh, but even more significant for them and for humanity. They began to realise that, instead of being destroyed by death, He had actually put an end to death and brought life and immortality to light. This was the foundation of their faith that God rather than man had the last word, and that in Jesus the Reign of God had triumphed over the reign of evil men. And this was the inspiration of their mission of " Good News " to the rest of the world.

Thus the Crucifixion and Resurrection, taken together, on the one hand define the evil in man and in human society, and on the other hand define Ultimate Reality as possessing both the love and the power adequate, not only to overcome man's evil purposes, but even to use these evil purposes in the service of Ultimate Good. By faith in this love and in this power, man himself becomes " a new creation ", and devotes himself to the task of building a New Society. It is through the Cross and through the Resurrection that men

have acquired the belief that even in this present evil world they can be reconciled to God, and so participate here and now in the life of His Eternal Kingdom. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

Out of this Faith came the New Society (the Church), as the symbol in this world of that divine community which can only be perfectly realised in heaven. The Catholic thought that the Church is the Extension of the Incarnation seems to be implied in several of the Epistles. It is probably too much to expect that in our time the Protestant sects will undergo a transformation sufficiently profound to make them capable of impressing persons who are non-members as having significance for their concept of Ultimate Reality. But when the Church Invisible does become less invisible than it is now, men will no doubt look to its corporate life and faith for help in understanding the nature of that Reality, for it is uniquely in the fellowship of the Church Universal that men come to know the truth about God.

One conclusion to which the line of thought followed in this paper leads me is that, theologically speaking, the definition of Ultimate Reality given by the life and death of Jesus, and by the events to which Jesus' life and death gave rise, is most adequately expressed in the doctrine of the Trinity — Ultimate Reality in itself, revealed in the life of a person, and at work creatively and redemptively throughout all history. That concept is, I believe, the nearest approximation to the truth of which the mind of man is capable.

Another conclusion is that the material from which the Christian interpretation of Ultimate Reality is derived is *given* material. It is given by the history of the Christian drama — a drama which will continue to the end of time in the life of the Church Universal.

The closing paragraph of Schweitzer's *Quest of the Historical Jesus* has always seemed to me to be the final word as to what He may mean to any one of us :

"He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lake-side, He came to those men who knew

Him not. He speaks to us the same word : " Follow thou Me ! " and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfil for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as a ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience Who He is. "



## The Son of God and the Son of Man

JOHN R. COATES.

The four Gospels, in the order in which we have them in the New Testament, represent the advance of our religion, from its Jewish starting-point, further and further into the Graeco-Roman world; and it might have been expected that this development would have been accompanied by a decrease in the use of arguments relating to Judaism and the Old Testament. This, however, is not the case. On the contrary, each of the last two Gospels is largely devoted to the task of making explicit the deeper significance and wider bearing of the very same claims that are made by its predecessors. The subject to which they are all devoted is the Person of Jesus, and, although a Greek-minded reader would find himself more at home in *John* than in *Matthew*, he would still find himself under the necessity of understanding the meaning of technical terms of Jewish theology. It is at the end of the fourth Gospel that the well-known words are found: "These things are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Messiah." And if it be urged that to this title, in the verse quoted, the author adds one that would sound more familiar to Hellenistic ears — "the Son of God" — it is to be remembered that both are found in the first verse of *Mark*, and in the Synoptic Gospels generally.

Professor C. H. Dodd, of Manchester University, has recently published a book, entitled *The Bible and the Greeks*, in which he examines a number of important New Testament words, and illustrates the necessity of going back to the Hebrew Bible for the understanding of their true Christian meaning. The same procedure is followed in Gerhard Kittel's new *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum N. T.*, whose publication is being so eagerly welcomed by Bible students all over the world. I would venture to assert that the knowledge of Hebrew is at least as important as the knowledge of Hellenistic Greek for the understanding of the New

Testament. If we are to find ourselves in the world in which Jesus lived, we must pass beyond the sphere of great ideas into the realm of wonderful works. The Gospel is not the enunciation of principles but the announcement of fact. Saving truth is not abstract but concrete. From the point of view of expression, the genius of the New Testament is identical with that of the Old. The primary values of Christianity are discerned, not by finding out wherein they resemble those of the Graeco-Roman world, but by learning how they differ from the Judaism which is their starting-point. This approach is particularly important in the case of the Fourth Gospel, and may be illustrated by a short study of the third chapter of that book. The meaning of the passage will be shewn most clearly by means of an expanded paraphrase.

The religious authorities in Jerusalem were impressed by the success of the ministry of Jesus, and realised that it might have the effect of weakening their own position. He was indeed drawing many away from what they regarded as orthodox Judaism, and His doctrine seemed likely to lead to a dangerous fanaticism on the part of the crowds that followed Him. They therefore conceived the idea of patronising Him. If they could induce Him to work under them, they might be able to modify His extremism and make Him harmless. So they decided to make Him an offer, and Nicodemus was chosen to convey it to Him. It was obviously undesirable that this official approach should be made openly, so the meeting took place secretly at night.

“ Rabbi, we know that Thou hast come as a teacher from God, for no one can work wonders as Thou dost, unless God be with him. ”

There is no need for the ambassador to go on to state the object of his visit. Jesus, as always, discerns the intention behind the words, and has no doubt as to what His answer must be, for He and His interviewer are living in different worlds. Official Judaism was still using the language of the Law and the Prophets, but it had no immediate experience of the power that brought them into being. Nicodemus and his friends could talk about God and His

Kingdom, but it was from the point of view of personal and national ambitions. When Jesus used those words, they were lightning, mystery, power; for behind them was experience of the reality for which they stand. It is of this experience that He is speaking when He makes His reply.

“One has to be begotten of God in order to see the Kingdom of God as I see it.”

When Nicodemus pours scorn on the idea of a second birth, Jesus makes a more explicit reference to that which happened to Him when He was baptized by John the Baptist. On that epoch-making occasion, He not only identified Himself with the New-Israel movement in its acknowledgment of the need of cleansing, but was brought by the power of the Holy Spirit into perfect unity of will with God, and knew Himself to be God's Son. In other words, it was through an experience comparable to being born that He had not only seen the nature of God's rule, but actually entered into it, so that He was able to exercise the powers of it.

“One cannot enter into the Kingdom of God without being baptized of water and spirit, as I was. The life of the spirit is absolutely different from the life of the flesh, and you and your colleagues will not understand Me until you too have been begotten of God. You need not be surprised at My insisting on this. The life of the spirit has freedom, like the wind, and mystery too. Listen! There is no mistaking that sound. But who can explain it?”

“What dost Thou mean?”

“Is it not clear to thee as the teacher of Israel? Our words are of what we know, and our witness is of what we have seen, but you will not receive it. If the illustration I have just given does not help you, it is useless to go on talking about the Kingdom of God, or even about the conditions of entering it. As for our working together, it is quite impossible. We use the same words, but we mean different things.”

Jesus now passes on to a second example of the difference between Himself and the Pharisees, by taking another outstanding phrase of Jewish Apocalyptic, viz. — “The



Son of Man." This enables Him to draw the contrast very vividly, and leads to a clear presentation of that which [is] dominant in His own self-consciousness. In order to follow the course of the argument, it is necessary to remember that in the Old Testament (*Daniel* vii) this phrase is used of the figure which represents the true Israel, "the People of the Saints of the Most High." The present writer believes that the symbolising of Israel as the Son of Man in *Daniel* is intended as the reply of Jewish faith to the challenge of Greek humanism. That, however, is not the aspect with which our chapter in *John* is concerned. Here the phrase is used to indicate what we should call the Church, and the subject under discussion is the Vocation of the Church.

The Jews, influenced by the teaching of the *Enoch* literature concerning the Son of Man, expected to be raised miraculously to a position above all nations, and to exercise judgment over them, enjoying a sense of power and superiority. But to Jesus the exact opposite of this was the truth.

"The essential thing about the Son of Man is not going up to Heaven, but coming down out of Heaven. If He is to be lifted up, it will be with the lifting up of the serpent made by Moses in the wilderness, that those who see Him may believe and have eternal life. His true throne is a cross. The Son of Man must be put to death."

The explanation of this mystery comes to light in the verses which begin with the great pronouncement:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His unique Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life. *The true Son of Man is the Son of God*, sent into the world, not to judge it, but to save it. Men judge themselves, when they prefer darkness to light."

For centuries prophets had dreamed on an Israel worthy to be called God's son. Hosea's well known words have many echoes: — "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with all Thy heart." So ran the ancient law of Israel. But none was found to love God back with a perfect adoring unselfishness, until Jesus came. For Him the words of the old Royal Formula became the

simple truth of the heart : " Thou art My Son ; this day have I begotten Thee. " So He awoke to the truth of His own eternal life. And because God is love, He must be love. Because God desires that all men should awaken to Himself and have eternal life, He too desires their salvation, to the point of sharing all their shame, bearing all their diseases, dying their death.

So, at last, in Jesus, the Son of Man finds His vocation as Son of God, and goes along the way of divine victory, which is downward in the flesh and in the mind, but upward in the spirit, which is self-less. And thus it comes to pass that " He who cometh from above is over all. " He speaks the very words of God, being filled with the Holy Spirit, whose nature is love invincible.

Spell-bound by the master of our spirits, we have forgotten Nicodemus and the Pharisees. But they will come back again, and in the end they will have Him killed. And out of His death will shine forth at last the true glory of the People of God, and a light to lighten the Gentiles.

What is His secret ? — He will not hate, He will not despise, He will not doubt, nor forsake ; but will go on believing, hoping, loving unquenchably.

And what is the secret of His secret, the final resting-place of faith ? Our chapter from *John* puts it in two ways, and this is the summary of the truth that is life : " *God so loved the world that He gave it His Son ;*" and : " *God so loved the Son that He gave Him all things.*"

## An International Dialogue on Jesus Christ

Pierre MAURY

*In this dialogue we meet again some of the participants in the previous international and interconfessional dialogues published by The Student World. Is there any need for a reminder that they are typical people, representative of different currents of religious thought, and that the author, while endeavouring to preserve the most honest objectivity, cannot avoid indicating the trend of his own thought? At least he has wished, not to prove his own point — which it would be possible to support much more solidly and theologically — but to give an account of one of those rather incoherent and unsystematic conversations which take place in international gatherings of students who are not specialists in theology.*

*The Englishman*<sup>1</sup>: Today we are not going to discuss questions which, in spite of their importance, remain secondary ones: the Bible, Christian Ethics and so on. We are going to deal with the centre of our faith, the Person of Jesus Christ. Who knows but that our divergences — of which I am aware — may not themselves appear very secondary here, in face of this “one thing needful”? I believe that Jesus Christ can and must be our meeting-place.

The great difficulty is to know how we are to approach our subject. If we were theologians, we might perhaps be tempted to confine ourselves at once within the limits of traditional dogmatics — Jesus as God, Jesus as Man, the unity of these two natures — whether with a view to accepting them, rejecting them or enlarging them. But it seems to me that the surest and also the most normal method is to begin with Jesus as those did whom He knew on earth during His Ministry, and who were for the most part lay people

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<sup>1</sup> This Englishman is, as you will see, not an Anglican — above all, not an Anglo-Catholic. I do not think he is a Presbyterian either. We may admit him to be a Methodist.



like ourselves. Let us watch Him live and die, let us listen to His words, let us reconstruct by an effort of imagination and sympathy the surroundings in which He lived and even the sound of His voice. . . . Perhaps then, if we are all honest, we shall discover the secret of His Person, which certainly surpasses the events of His Life. In any case, I for my part see no other possible method.

*The Continental:* You are right to put the question of method. But you are putting it in such a way that you resolve it in advance, perhaps without noticing that you are doing so. In any case, let me make some objections, or at least ask you some questions. First of all : when you say we must know Jesus Christ in the same way as His contemporaries, I would ask you : *can* we, even with all the imagination in the world, make ourselves each into a Jew of the first century ; can we think like the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the zealots or the common people of Galilee and Judaea ? To be face to face with Jesus as they were, would mean being nourished by the Law and the Prophets, believing them without reserve, feeling ourselves members of the *Chosen People*, in the full sense of the word, and at the same time being crushed under the disgraceful yoke of the Romans, experiencing the offence, not only of a foreign overlord — a thing which the inhabitants of colonised countries can feel better than you and I — but also of a paganism hated by Yahweh, triumphing in spite of the promises of Yahweh. In short, it would mean being fired by the great Messianic expectation.

*The Englishman:* But I do not deny all that. When, to put it in a word, I wish to begin with the Jesus of history in order to reach the Christ of faith, it just means that I anticipate that history will help me to restore the atmosphere of the times of Jesus. And it is obviously to that restoration that we must apply ourselves first of all.

*The Continental:* All the historical reconstructions in the world cannot make us *really* hearers of Jesus from Galilee or Judaea. You may *speak* of the expectation of the Messiah, but you do not really expect Him — for the simple reason

that, for you, He has come in Jesus Christ. You know the end of the story : Good Friday and Easter and Pentecost. How could you forget all that ? Your effort would still be purely theoretical. But I wish to go further in the same direction. The thing which distinguishes you irremediably from the contemporaries of Jesus is that you are not *really* one of those contemporaries ; you do not see Him, you do not hear Him, you cannot touch the hem of His garment. You know Him *indirectly* through the witness of the Apostles and the Evangelists. If you want to compare yourself with someone of that period, I believe you would have to put yourself among those thousands of people, come from all the ends of the earth to Pentecost, who heard — each in his own tongue — “ the wonderful works of God ” which Peter was telling about Jesus. You others too ; each of us in his own tongue — and naturally I do not mean only his outward tongue, but his traditions, his thought-forms, and so on. — It is in that tongue alone that we can hear Jesus speak and know Him truly. Only I ask you to observe that Peter did not ask of them what you are asking of us : the ability to watch the Jesus of history living. Right from the start, and without saying anything to them about the circumstances of the Nazarene, he announced to them the Miracle of His Resurrection and the Mystery of His Death on the Cross. How are we to begin ? Like Peter — and all the Apostles, like Paul himself preaching to the Gentiles, (just look at the discourses in *Acts*, including the one at Athens) — or as you propose ? The question is not so simple.

*The American:* All the same, you do not want us to approach Jesus Christ by considering the most incomprehensible and, I for my part would say, the most doubtful things about Him. You know as well as I do the critical studies on the Resurrection, whose conclusions are extremely reserved. Besides, is it not enough to state the contradictions in the different texts which report it ? And besides, I should like to know what use it would be to you to know that a man was crucified and rose again about the year

35 A.D., even if you managed to establish that fact historically ? What use is that for my faith ? Having said that, I agree with you that scientifically it is not possible to re-live the life of Jesus as one of His contemporaries. And then, I am a little distrustful of this method, which is all imagination and emotion. Pietism has praised it up. It is often pure sentimentalism. What matters for me is to release the inspiration of the Gospel, to establish its ethical principles. Then it does not matter much about historical uncertainties and critical radicalism ; it does not even matter much that we know nothing about Jesus in the strict sense of the word — the ideal presented to us remains ; it still has its contagious power, it seizes us and captivates us. The Sermon on the Mount, if we took it seriously, would be a dynamite capable of exploding our unjust social system, just as in the course of history it has exploded out-worn forms. That is how we should reach, not the religion about Jesus, but the religion of Jesus. To know His Spirit is to know Him ; it is the only way to know Him.

*The Eastern Orthodox :* You will not be astonished that I do not entirely agree with any of you, or rather that my point of departure and my point of view are different. For me, to know Jesus Christ is to participate in His reality, which is the very reality of the Church. You have talked of being contemporary with Jesus Christ ; that is certainly not possible if you try to achieve it by historical research or psychological study. But it is possible in the fellowship of the Church. And also : what is the fellowship of the Church if it is not participation in Jesus Christ ? It is in Him that we have come together. And it is Love which binds together the members of the Church. And that Love is present in us. That for me is the true approach to Jesus Christ. It may be very rudimentary so far as intellectual knowledge goes, but it is ontologically real ; I do not see any other way. For all the others are individualistic, and so, sinful ; they discriminate between us, often divide us instead of uniting us ; so they are not knowledge of Jesus Christ. Certainly I do not deny the interest that there is in reading the Gospels



and knowing the historical Life of Jesus. For that matter, the Church encourages us to read it ; much more than that, she reads with us, she reads the Gospel to us. But only the voice of the Church can make that Gospel real to us ; and she can do that because she is herself the Living Gospel. I cannot conceive the Bible, you know, as being independent of the Church, over against, her, accessible in any other way than through her. The Bible is a constituent element of the Church. Or again, if you like this way of putting it : there is not the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith ; there is the Jesus Christ of the Church. It is from Him that we must start, as it is to Him that we come in the end.

*The Englishman :* Here we are, apparently, stuck at the beginning, and possibly even more different from each other than I had supposed.

But must that difference really hold us up ? Is it not more formal than it seems at first sight ? If we are stumbling at this first obstacle, then let us not enter upon purely theological discussions. It does not matter much that we should reach Jesus by this or that method ; the essential thing is to reach Him. Besides, it is He who is the Way ; He said so. It seems to me that up till now we have been describing *our* ways to Him. I propose therefore that we now enter into the heart of our subject, and that we deal with the Work and the Person of Jesus Christ. Now, there again, although I am disposed to admit other points of view, it is by the Humanity of Jesus Christ that I am gripped first of all. I believe in His Divinity ; but it is by His perfect Humanity that I am as it were introduced into the mystery of His Divinity. I judge even that we must guard against going beyond that first knowledge. After all, if Jesus is the Son of God, is not that because He is perfectly Man ? Is it not just that plenitude of the human which is Divine in Him ?

*The American :* Look out ! You are just going to do exactly what you very wisely declared at the beginning you wanted to avoid. Here we are, right in the middle of the theology of the Councils ! The whole of Greek metaphysics is coming around the corner...

*The Englishman:* But not at all ! On the contrary, I am not making those purely intellectual distinctions between the two Natures, I am showing you their unity from the point of view of Life. After all, what I want to say is that in the living Person of Jesus Christ we know, by the very perfection of His Character, both what God is and what man is. That is what the Councils you so dislike were trying to say in the formulae of their period, which I do not dream of imposing upon you, but which I do not want to deny either...

*The Continental:* Are you quite sure you really understand that theology of the Councils, or even, let us say more simply, the thought of the New Testament, when you give to those words "the Living Person of Jesus Christ" the meaning I suspect ? For you, the Person of Jesus Christ is a reality analogous to our own ; we can know His Person as we know our own or that of another man. The mystery of Jesus is for you, first of all the mystery which every individual is for those who approach him, and then the mystery of a perfect man. His Divinity is His Impeccability.

*The Englishman:* No ! for I believe in the Incarnation. Only for me the Incarnation — as its very name indicates — obliges us to start from the Humanity of Jesus ; because He "was made flesh." I must in some way have my point of departure in His human "flesh."

*The Continental:* Then what do you make of the Word of Jesus to Peter : "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee ?". . . We need God Himself, the Holy Spirit, to know the Incarnation, and therefore to know the Humanity of Jesus itself, which is, let us remember, a true, but special humanity, the humanity of a God.

*The American:* More and more theological ! Since I must resign myself to that, I ask you one simple question : What is the religious meaning — I mean to say, the meaning for my personal religion, for my action as a religious man — what is the meaning of the Incarnation ? After all, I am a man from whom God expects something, and it is what

I shall *do* which counts in the eyes of God Himself. Jesus said so : " It is not those who say unto Me Lord, Lord. . . " Then I should like you to explain to me what it changes in my ethical life to believe in, for example, the pre-existence of Jesus.

*The Continental:* You are going to be dissatisfied with my answer : my first concern is not to know *what* change in my actions will be made by my believing in this or that doctrine. My concern is to know what I am for God, how He judges me, what I owe Him and what I can expect from Him : in other words, what my true relation with God is. You quite understand, then, that the Words, the Life, the Death of Jesus Christ do not have the same meaning at all, if Jesus Christ is God Himself calling me, commanding me, judging me and, above all, saving me, as they do if He is only the greatest of my fellowmen, with whom I compare myself and whose message I hear. If I had the time, and if you would not be too horrified at the idea, I should show you that these famous Councils, when they talked about the " Son begotten, not made, " for example, wished more than anything to safeguard a practical truth. They were affirming that we are *truly* saved, since it is God who saves us and not a creature, however high. No creature could save us, in any case, because God alone is able to save us ; we are so lost and He is so holy. . . Having said that, I hasten to add that such a belief does change something, and even everything, in our life. For it means to believe that Jesus is our only Lord, who alone has the right to be obeyed by us.

*The Englishman:* I am afraid that our discussion is getting into a blind alley again. Can we not really get past the question of *our* point of view about Jesus to study the only important thing : the content of Jesus Christ — if I may put it that way ? . . .

*The Continental:* But that is perhaps because the real question about Jesus Christ, the only one, is the question of *our* attitude. There is no " content of Jesus Christ " apart from the position we adopt towards Him. Do we not see



that in one of the most important scenes in the Gospel, when Jesus Himself puts to His disciples one single vital question : " Who say *ye* that I am ? " It would appear that for Jesus it is the answer to that question which is the only important one. Is it not there that Jesus really shows His Divinity, that He compels us to be for or against Him ? No man can make that claim, for one can refuse to answer any man's question : God alone compels us to take sides.

*The American :* I think I understand you better now. Not that I believe all your speculations to be necessary ; but from my point of view too, the strength of the Gospel is the decision which it provokes, the action to which it gives rise. You explain that by the metaphysical Divinity of Jesus Christ, I by the Divine strength of the moral ideal which that Gospel proclaims. Does not that come down to the same thing ? However that may be, instead of discussing the Person of Jesus Christ, would it not be more worth while to reach agreement about His Work ?

*The Englishman :* That is what I was proposing, although, to tell you the truth, the Work and the Person of Jesus Christ are as inseparable for me as for our Continental friend. The Work of Jesus Christ is what He was as well as what He did or said. But let us leave that. I should like our Orthodox friend, who is the most silent among us, to explain to us in broad outline his opinion on this point.

*The Eastern Orthodox :* If I remain silent, it is not for want of listening to you most attentively. But, as I have told you, I have difficulty in talking about Jesus Christ alone and isolated, as you are all doing. For me, He is always surrounded by the " great cloud of witnesses. " His Work is the Mystical Body of the Church ; it is that new Humanity of which Love is the principle, as Divinity is the Love which is the principle of the Holy Trinity. When we participate in the Church, especially through the Liturgy and Communion, we are really redeemed, one might say that we are " re-divinised. " Being made members of Jesus Christ, we are members one of another. At bottom, for me,

the essential work of Jesus Christ is not only symbolised, but *wrought* in worship. Christ rises from the dead in it, not only for us but in us, so that we rise from the dead in it through Him and with Him. *That* is salvation, that in us death is vanquished, that the life-giving grace runs through us as the sap of the vine gushes out into the branches. You know that Easter is our great festival. That is because we are not commemorating in it a past event, exterior to ourselves. There we are truly reborn to the Divine Life, there all the abysses between God and us are really filled up, surmounted ; the Incarnation is continued in us, the Divinity of Christ becomes ours. Christ makes Himself manifest even in our own earthly existence.

*The American:* What strange mysticism ! I'll grant you that it is very beautiful and that in certain respects it tempts me. We Americans are always being accused of rationalism and pragmatism. But that is because people do not know us. There is deep down within us a great longing for that supernatural fellowship which gives us a share in the Divine Life. Your theory of the Sacrament which raises to life all our being is beautiful. Your idea of the Church whose bond is Love is also beautiful. . . . But I must frankly say : I resist this mysticism, first of all because it is very emotional, and also because it might lull to sleep my power of indignation and my fighting spirit ! And then, you speak of the Church. But I only know the Churches, which are very far from that ideal. Does your own Church itself realise it ? Well then ? ?

*The Englishman:* I too have been touched by what you said. In the first place, I have enough Anglican and even Anglo-Catholic friends to be very conscious that there is in your conception of the Sacrament, and in general of the Church, a great truth which we have perhaps forgotten. It is true that we too often look towards Jesus Christ as isolated individuals, and that we do not recognise the reality, one might say the realism, of the communion of saints. But it seems to me all the same that you have brought us too soon to the last element in our knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Before His Work in the Church comes His Work in us through personal faith. And that Work is : recognition of His Ministry of preaching, pardon, expiation. It is because I have read the Gospels and the Epistles that I attach myself to the Church, and not the other way round. I should say : the Gospel gives me to the Church, and not : the Church gives me to the Gospel. A second remark. You speak of Easter as the point of departure for the Christian life. But it is necessary to *arrive* at Easter. One cannot start from it. I do indeed desire that God may raise us to new life, even here below, but only after having passed through the stages of repentance and conversion. That happens in the presence of the Cross.

*The Continental:* It is interesting to see the direction our conversation is taking. Some years ago we should have talked for a long time at the beginning about Jesus the Revealer, about the laws of the Kingdom, about the preaching of Jesus, as if one could distinguish the Saviour from the Revealer. I am not sure that even today some of us are not thinking that we are leaving too much in the background these very important aspects of Jesus Christ. But the fact is that by all roads we come back to the centre : to the Mystery of God which is in Jesus Christ, and which concerns *us*, as we are well aware. And that I believe to be the enormous progress of our generation in relation to the last. For the latter it seemed that one could, almost that one must, deal with the Jesus of the Gospels from the outside, as a neutral spectator, and that one was led naturally and logically by this first contact to another knowledge, the true one, the knowledge of faith. Today it seems to me that we are again beginning to understand that with Jesus Christ one must believe in Him in order to know Him, and not know Him in order to believe in Him — which is impossible ! But I should like to say one word more in reply to our Orthodox friend. I tremble a little to hear him speak so easily of the Resurrection, of *our* resurrection. Certainly I too believe that Easter is truly the eternal Work of Jesus Christ, that is, salvation. But though I believe in its



reality, and expect it, I do not see it yet. Understand me rightly : I know that " death is swallowed up in victory, " that that is accomplished ; but I, in whom there is still death — sin — I am victorious only in hope ; I await, as St. Paul said, " the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. " It is a sure and confident awaiting, a " hope which shall not be made ashamed " — but an awaiting all the same. I am glad our Russian friend says to us again : " Christ is risen " ; but though I know that I shall rise again with Him, I am not yet risen. And that is why I live in the presence of the Cross, as a sinner. The work of Jesus Christ is in His declaring to me on the Cross the Pardon of God, to convince me of a sin which alas ! is very present. His Resurrection is the *promise* which is given me.

*The American :* Once again I have great difficulty in following you. After all, I am obsessed by our world, the world in which we live, alas ! so badly — in the kind of life that you call sin ! Now about this sin : it is not enough that I should repent of it, it is necessary for me not to commit it any more. And not only I : everybody else too. The justice of God must not be only in heaven, carrying out there atonements which are most incomprehensible anyway ; it must be on earth ; mark my words : *on earth*. You say we must be Jesus Christ's contemporaries. Let us say for a change that Jesus Christ must be our contemporary. Do let us not only go back to Him, in the past or in eternity ; let Him come to us, where we are, in the present. And then, you will see, we shall no longer be able to live as we are living. We shall have to change — to change everything.

*The Continental :* That is true ! And you are right to say it to us.

*The Englishman :* Our discussion has much surprised me. I had the responsibility of leading it. And it has run away with me. We have not followed at all the plan which I had, perhaps naïvely, prepared. I thought we should speak of the Ministry of Jesus on earth, of His Teaching, then of His redemptive Death, and that from there we should

come to the Living Christ. I thought that objections would be made to His Miracles, that there would be talk of the Law of Love which He taught and lived, of the task which He imposes upon us of following His example and being "Christ-like." And we should have talked about all that. We have only skimmed the surface of the question. But one thing *has* struck me as I listened to you : that is how we are all attached to Him. It would seem that He will not let us go. We are all speaking very clumsily about Him, it seems to me. Sometimes it would seem that He vanishes in our words like a phantom. But He always returns. Do you not believe that that is the essential thing ? We cannot leave Him. We are like His disciples when He asked them : " Will ye also go away ? " We can answer : " *No !* " And I feel sure that if our Federation were the community of those who do not wish to go away from Jesus Christ, who cannot do so, or rather, those whom He does not let go, our message in the world would not lack a response. There are so many of our comrades who say like Peter : " To Whom shall we go ? " without knowing where to go. But they do not know the end of the sentence : " but unto Thee. Thou hast the words of eternal life." We must teach them the end of the sentence. But if we are to do so, each of us must know it, and re-affirm it every day.

## The Humanity of Jesus Christ

W. A. VISSER 'T HOOFT

### *Is His Humanity Self-evident ?*

The intellectuals of the generation before our own thought that the humanity of Jesus Christ was *self-evident*. They might discuss the character of His humanity; but they never asked *if* He had been truly man.

It was the immanentism of that period, which admitted only such phenomena as are measurable, controllable and uniform with our experience, which forced them to eliminate everything in Jesus which seemed superhuman, more than natural or normal. Rather than accept a Jesus-God, they preferred to excise two-thirds of the pages of the Bible.

For us, the situation is entirely different. Such immanentism is discredited; our universe is more open, less rigidly fixed and limited. We are less sure of our human criteria, more ready to seek beyond ourselves. And, above all, after all the mutilations of these decades, the Gospel is still there, more entire and irreducible than ever. A candid reading tells us, just as clearly as Biblical science can, that this Gospel is concerned, not with a man whom we can classify, — be it as prophet, as religious genius, as discoverer of an ethical system, — but rather with a Man who is absolutely unique and isolated, in the sense that He understands how to create an absolutely new order by absolutely new means; a Man who is convinced that the whole future of the world and of each human being depends on what He has to announce and to do; a Man who knows that His life and His death have a decisive significance for the fate of the world and of humanity.

Note that I am not yet speaking of the question as to whether He is *right*. I am simply asking that it be at last admitted that the Jesus of the documents considered Himself, and was considered by the disciples and the evangelists, as



an entirely special Being, incomparable with others in His vocation as well as in the reality of His life. *That* Jesus is, at all events, the only one we can know. If there was another Jesus, we know nothing about Him. If He was not like that, we cannot know anything about the reality of His life. The only explanation which is based on all the data is that given above.

But if that be true, His humanity is not a self-evident truth. Faced with this Man, who believes that the salvation of the whole of humanity depends on Him, must we not say: "Either He is of another order than we, or else He is mad"? Can we admit, as a third possibility, that He is human in the full sense of that word? It is indeed the case that, when we had not yet learned to eliminate from the Bible that which we found it difficult to understand, — in other words, at almost every epoch in the life of the Church until the Age of Reason, — the temptation was much greater to see Him as solely *Divine* than to see Him as solely *human*. And it would appear that our temptation too is the former, rather than that which consists in forgetting His Divinity.

No: the humanity of Jesus is truly not a thing which leaps to the eye. What we see in Him first of all is how He differs from us human beings. His certitude, His authority, His faith, His entire consecration to the Will of God, His purity of heart, His will to suffer, His claim to be able to pardon with a definitive pardon; and, no less, the absence in Him of what is perhaps the most human characteristic: wavering in the sense of vocation, paltriness, pettiness, egoism; all that leads us rather to believe with Peter that He is the Son of the Living God than to believe that He is of our race. And that impression is true. *He comes from elsewhere*. His origin is not on earth. He has been *sent* to us. He has *become* man. He was something else first of all. He was with God, and like God. He interests us for this reason, that He has an *authority* completely different from the authority of the scribes, the philosophers or the theologians. He is *the Other*.

But how, then, are we to understand His humanity?

We shall succeed in doing so only if we do not forget that that humanity is paradoxical and not at all self-evident. His humanity, not His Divinity, is the real miracle : the miracle of *Christmas*. That which we wish to understand is nothing less than this : *When God became man, what manner of man did He become ?*

The question is not philosophical or speculative, but historical and concrete. We are not going to discuss what manner of man God *could* become, but we are going to describe what manner of man He *has* become in history. After all, God can become whatever He wishes. What matters is what God is *in fact* upon earth, God among us and with us. We are concerned with a real Man, not with an idea.

### *Aspects of the Humanity of Jesus*

The first thing which strikes us is that Jesus is *a Man of whom one cannot write the biography*. It has often been tried. And even in our own day there have appeared many books which try to describe the human life of Jesus in the same way as the lives of the famous men of history are described. But there is *not a single one* which has succeeded in presenting a biography worthy of the name. The reason for these failures is simple. The biographers desire to know more about Jesus than it is given us to know. From these few pages of the Gospels which treat of the existence of Jesus between His birth and His death they wish to extract large volumes. And *above all* : in documents which are absolutely mute on everything that interests the psychological biographer : development in youth, education, interior crises, intimate thoughts : they wish to seek the material for their analytical studies. The result is, not only that they present us with more or less well-invented biographical romances, but also that they give us the portrait of a Jesus quite other than the Jesus of the Bible : a Jesus who is a hero or human genius, a philosopher or a mystic, but not the Jesus who interests the authors of the only documents that we have, that is, the Jesus of whom it is not the human existence

considered in itself — psychologically, morally or intellectually — but rather the human existence considered in the setting of an entire plan of God, which is of real importance.

Heroic language, human adjectives, all that tends to glorify human capacities is absent from the New Testament. That is because the Evangelists, like St. Paul, are too much absorbed by the eternal significance of the life of Jesus to be interested in details of that kind. It is still more because they know too well that Jesus is no Prometheus, to wrest the gift of salvation from heaven by means of a proud and superior humanity.

Someone has said that the Gospels make the impression of a point without extension. That point is the moment of conversion, of hearing God, of deciding for or against Him. The *Life of Jesus* is a poor subject for biographers because all that the inquisitive psychologist tries to discover in Him loses simply all its value when one really enters His presence.

But do not let us think that that is to say that Jesus was a kind of automaton, that He was not *truly Man*. Even if we do not know enough about His Life to describe it in a psychological biography, we know enough about it to say of Him that He was like us, that nothing human was foreign to Him — except one central thing : sin. He experienced emotion. The Gospels do not stop to analyse His states of soul, but they do tell us clearly that He knew sorrow and joy, compassion and friendship, anger and gentleness. He is not a demi-god whose place is somewhere between God and us. He comes right among us, and takes part in our life, with all its curious mixture of tragic and joyful events. He has, like us, to decide constantly between good and evil, or, (as so much more frequently happens), between two mixtures of good and evil. If we think, for example, of the moment when He let His parents wait upon the highway because He was in conversation with the teachers in the Temple, we realise that that must have been a painful decision for Him between two duties. And does not the necessity of attacking the Pharisees enter into a category of decisions very similar to those which we have to make nearly every day of our lives ?



A true Man, living in human reality — which seems to involve compromises — and nevertheless without sin : is there not a contradiction there ? The answer lies in the central aspect of the humanity of Christ : obedience to God.

He is a true Man, since He lives like us all in a state where there is the possibility of conflict between human will and the Divine Will. A true Man, also, since He has to seek to know the Will of God, and can know it only by an act of faith, and not by any kind of exterior and objective evidence. A true Man, finally, because that Will leads Him into situations which seem incomprehensible and even unacceptable from the human point of view. But *without sin* — because He always remains open, prays without ceasing, is constantly turned towards God, gets to know the Will of God and *fulfils it*. “ I seek not Mine own will, but the Will of Him that sent Me. ” “ Obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. ” The whole life of Jesus is consciously directed towards that supreme goal. He is the only one who has ever obeyed *always* and right to the end.

Obedience always implies a certain humility, that is, the will to serve him whom one obeys. But with Jesus it implies more. His humility is not only humility before His God, but also humility in His relations with men. His abasement is a double one. Not only has He — He who is God — come down to men ; He has also become the Servant of all. He feels at His ease among the disinherited. As St. Paul says : “ He emptied Himself,... and was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself. ” And, as Kierkegaard emphasised, He humbled *Himself* ; His is a humility not passive but active, a humiliation freely accepted. There has been on our earth a Man who did not assert Himself, a Man who considered life, not as a prize but as a sacrifice. Far from appearing as the Messiah-King of Glory, as His contemporaries would have expected Him, He consciously chose, in order to fulfil them Himself, the prophecies of Isaiah and other prophets which announce a Messiah-Servant, misunderstood by men, rejected and suffering. One would really have to be blind in order not to see that all the Gospels show Jesus, not as a

genius who desires to shine by His gifts, but rather as a Man who reverses all human values by declaring that before God high things are low, and poor things rich.

But let us make no mistake. He is no anarchist. His humility is not an end in itself. He is not humble through cowardice or lack of vitality. His humility does not exclude authority and severity. It is humility *before God*, and signifies that God alone is able to fill our inner emptiness. Thus His Life illustrates His Teaching. "Blessed are the poor (the beggars) in spirit," the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, the sayings concerning the first and the last, and many others find their deepest meaning only in the setting of His Life of conscious humility. He, the only one who might have lived an independent life, and who would not, like us, have made it a demonstration of inner poverty, — He lives in complete dependence.

It is not enough for Him to humiliate Himself during His life. He must go on descending lower still, in order to touch the bottom of the human abyss, the abyss of sin. His obedience leads to the Cross, to absolute defeat, where He identifies Himself with human despair, even with sin. As He dies, He cries: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And so He has really reached the goal. He has placed Himself beside all those who are separated from God by sin. The man Jesus obeys right up to the very moment when obedience means to feel Himself absolutely alone, far from men and even from His Father. His faith remains complete, even when God is no longer there to sustain it. He gave to God all that it is possible to give. He passed through all human distress, right up to the hell of being separated from God. But just in accepting the call to go to the very end in faith and in obedience, He showed Himself to be the new Man. A human being has obeyed — the Kingdom of Heaven is here.

How do we know that? By His Word; that is to say, by His proclamation of the Kingdom of God. His life of obedience, humility and suffering is the confirmation of the News which He announces. And that which is new in this News is not the idea of a Kingdom of God, but the fact that

that Kingdom has *come*, that that reality of faith is a *present* reality. It is present in Jesus Christ Himself. The evangelists use the expressions " Kingdom of God " and " Christ " interchangeably. It is Jesus who institutes the new era in the relations of God and the world. The Kingdom of God is here, since the Messiah-King is here.

Are we not thus going outside our subject : the *humanity* of Jesus Christ ? No : for it is precisely by the character of the humanity of Jesus Christ that the character of His royalty is determined. That is no manifest royalty, but a secret royalty. Jesus, the Man, is a King who is recognised only by those who have ears to hear. He is a King who keeps His secret, who avoids success, who scandalises those who believe in Him as well as the world. He is a King with no credentials but the truth of His Word and His Life. In other words, His humanity reveals what He is to those who open their heart in faith ; but it hides His identity from the multitude. He wishes to be accepted only in virtue of His real authority, which is not verifiable from without, but is recognisable to those who can hear the voice of God. So He does not announce openly to the multitude who He is, until the moment at the end of His Mission when, before the high priest, He declares openly that He is the Christ. But in reality the secret is still kept, because the Death on the Cross and the Burial are the absolute negation of a manifestation of Divinity and Messianic royalty. It is only through the Resurrection that the disciples, and those who believed through their witness, received true certainty that this Man was God among us, God incarnate.

### *His Humanity: an Object of Offence and of Faith*

What are we to say of this Man ? Let us frankly admit that He astonishes us beyond measure, that we shall never quite know what to do with Him, where to place Him in our life, in our world. He breaks through our categories. "*He is too big for our little hearts.*" (H. G. Wells). If only that were *all* ! But let us admit further that our astonishment is always, (even if we are believers), mixed with



a feeling of being scandalised, offended. We should like the Man who comes to us as the Envoy of God to confirm our taste for exterior splendour and human grandeur. We should like to be able to determine by irrefutable proofs that this Man was not mistaken in declaring Himself to be Messiah and Saviour. Why this strange mixture of greatness and humility, of attraction and offence, of visibility and invisibility? Is not God powerful enough to speak to us more clearly, so convincingly that we should know once for all who His Envoy is? Why the eternal *chiaroscuro*? Why did God choose to reveal Himself, not in a direct and evident way, but indirectly, as a presence real but veiled which only the perspicacity of faith can discover? It is probably because of these irritating questions, to which we never receive any other answer than that which Jesus Christ Himself is, that we are tempted to fashion for ourselves a Jesus other than Him of the Bible, either a Jesus who is a hero and a genius, or a Jesus who is entirely Divine and victorious.

Why the *incognito*? Let us look for the answer in the Biblical message itself.

Jesus was recognised as the Christ only by those who were not content with a superficial glance, who did not ask for a Revelation of flesh and blood, but who tried to reach the bottom of the mystery of His Life. That is because He does not wish to impose the truth of His existence upon us, but, on the contrary, to *hide* it until the end of His Life, when the great unmasking comes — the hour of the confrontation of God and the world. Pascal says: "He remained unknown among men, and His truth remains among common opinions, *without outward difference*."

Why? In order that the true difference, the inward one, may receive its true signification: in order that the relationship with Christ may have the character of decision. If God were to make Himself manifest with exterior evidence, we should accept His manifestation, but in a quite exterior way. Our "all", our *ego* would not be implicated. God would receive only our intellectual, objective, coldly scientific assent. But God wants *us* and our all. He is seeking *us*,

and that is why He desires to be sought. He wants our *faith*, and that is why He comes to us in such a way that only faith can recognise Him.

So the *incognito* and the offence, far from being a cruel game of hide-and-seek, are a proof of the Love and the Grace of God. The offence is the sign of the Grace of Him who is seeking to re-establish the relation of Father and son, a relation which can never be true on the basis of a simple, manifest and exterior manifestation, but only on the basis of a personal decision.

Faith is risk, a personal act. It is a matter of *certitude*, never one of *security*. God has descended very low, because we are very low, but also because He does not wish us to attach ourselves to anything but Himself. We are such idolaters that we would take any evident revelation, any glorious revelation as a substitute for God. With Jesus Christ, there is no risk of our halting at the outward appearance. The outward appearance of His Life confronts us with the choice, either to go our way to more seductive and less offensive paths, or else to penetrate to the very secret of His Existence, and to recognise Him as the Son of God.

### *His Humanity as Our Example: Following Him.*

But to have faith in Jesus Christ, to recognise Him for what He is, is not simply to know that He is the Son of God; it is also to follow Him. The way which He has traversed, the way of obedience, of humiliation and of suffering, is also *our* way. If we wish to reach the goal which He shows us, we shall do so only by accepting His way, and our life too must pass through the depths. Of course, nothing in our life will ever be comparable with the night of Gethsemane and with Golgotha. But it remains true that the movement from above downwards, of growing impoverishment, of emptying oneself, must be the rhythm of our life as it was of His.

Is this a tragic and discouraging prospect? That depends on our present situation. If we are still *naïve* enough, and ignorant enough of what we are and what the world is, it may be that we will repel with indignation the

very possibility of such an almost negative existence, and that we will want first of all to try ways which lead to the heights of human life, to self-assertion, to riches rather than to poverty. But if we have already been dismayed by the discovery of what we are and what the world is, if we have already lived intensely and deeply enough to have rejected illusions; and, above all, if we have understood that to be left alone in our solitude is worse than any obedience, any humiliation, any suffering; then perhaps we shall be able to accept the invitation of Jesus: "Follow thou Me." It is then that we shall know with St. Paul that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Is this a negative life? Anything but that. Hope will make us live as those who look towards the future, and who watch actively and with perseverance.

## Contemporaneity with Christ

SÖREN KIERKEGAARD

### Introductory Note.

*This short extract from Kierkegaard's book: Practice in Christianity: has been included in the present symposium because it says so incisively many things about the real character of the Life of Christ on earth, and our relation to it, which complete the picture given by the previous articles. It requires, however, to be seen in a wider context if its full meaning is to become clear.*

*Sören Kierkegaard, that great and gloomy Dane whose thought is having such an incalculably great influence on theology and philosophy today, lived in the middle of last century (1813-1855). His was a short life by reason of its intensity and profundity. Like Pascal, (who died at almost exactly the same age), he burned himself out in the service of his Lord. Of both it might be said: "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up."*

*At the end of his life, he characterises his service to the cause of Christianity as being: the restoration to the idea of "faith" of a determining quality which had long been lacking in the conception commonly held among church-people and commonly preached from Christian pulpits. His attack upon "the parsons" is so biting just because his insight into the gravity of their misrepresentation of the truth is so profound.*

*The misrepresentation which he attacks is that which magnifies Christ as the Lord of Glory by omitting to mention that He was despised and rejected of men, and which minimises the risk and the "offence" of faith by mentioning all kinds of historical considerations which are supposed to be making it progressively easier for any reasonable man to admit that Jesus was the Christ.*



*The determining quality to which Kierkegaard bears witness is the "offence" and the risk of faith in One Whose humiliation during His earthly Life was a terrible reality; whose Majesty was concealed from everybody but those who made a humanly-speaking impossible and absurd act of faith; and Whose Call: "Come unto Me!" was given, not out of His triumphant Glory but out of His humiliation, so that to answer it means facing the prospect of an equally terrible humiliation in our own lives also.*

*It is impossible, as Kierkegaard shows, even to hear His Call (far less to answer it) except in "the situation of contemporaneity" of which this extract speaks. This "contemporaneity" is not, however, to be achieved either by transposing ourselves to the first century in imagination, thus making an abstraction from all the time which lies between us and His earthly life, or by transposing Him to the twentieth century in imagination, and representing Him as the "Supreme Friend" present among us today. For the historical distance between then and now is only a relative and temporal one, whereas the distance between Him and us is an absolute and eternal one. True contemporaneity is an attitude of our inner life towards Christ the absolute and eternal Reality, Who is separated from us by the "infinite qualitative difference", the rupture caused by our sin, but Who comes to us at every moment of time with His absolute and eternal Call: "Come unto Me!"*

*The true time in which we can become contemporary with Christ is the time of "actuality" (Wirklichkeit), the present moment in our inner life, the time in which we make our decisions. This time has nothing to do with the flow of the relative time-stream, in which any one point is exactly the same as any other, and in which "the present" is only the relative point of transition from the relative past to the relative future. For the time of actuality, the present moment in our inner life, has the quality of absoluteness; here we come face to face with Christ as the absolute and eternal Reality — real in His humiliation as well as in His exaltation — and here we make the decision*

which has a not merely relative and "temporal", but absolute and eternal significance: the decision between faith and "offence".

That decision is all the more real and terrible because it is Christ in the form of a servant who spoke, and who speaks, the words: "Come unto Me"; and it is to Him as He meets us thus, having "no beauty that we should desire Him", that we must make reply. And to be offended is humanly speaking the only possibility. It is not flesh and blood that can reveal to us the possibility of faith, but only our Father in Heaven.

Kierkegaard's method of communicating his message corresponds exactly with the matter he wishes to communicate; it is an "indirect communication", in which the central truth of which he speaks is clothed "in the form of a servant", so that its glory is not immediately apparent. That is indeed the only method appropriate to convey a message about the humiliation of the Son of God; for it is a method which may offend, and which yields the secret of its message only to those who have ears to hear.

So Kierkegaard makes us wrestle with his message. And so he brings us in our inner life into the time of actuality, of contemporaneity with Christ, and leaves us there to decide for ourselves whether we will believe in Christ as the Son of God, or whether we will be offended in Him.



With its invitation to all who "labour and are heavy laden", Christianity came into the world, not, as the parsons whiningly and untruly introduce it, as a splendid example of reasons for consolation, but as — the *Absolute*. God wills that it should be so because of His Love; but it is *God* who wills it, and He wills as He will. He will not be transformed by men into an amiable — human God: He wills to transform men, and wills it so because of His Love. Nor does He will to hear anything about the human impertinences that they can utter, as to why and wherefore Christianity came into the world: it is the *Absolute*, and is meant to be so.

Therefore all the relative whys and wherefores which men have hit upon are untrue. Perhaps they were suggested by a kind of humane compassion which thinks it must bargain a little — for God probably does not know man, His demands are too excessive, and so the parsons must come along to beat them down a bit. Perhaps the parsons came upon this idea in order to stand well with men, and to reap advantage from the proclamation of Christianity; for when it is reduced to the merely human level, to that which arises in the hearts of men, then people are pleased with it of course; and of course they are equally pleased with the amiable speaker, who can make Christianity so mild — if the Apostles had been able to do that, they would have pleased the world in their time too. But all that is an untruth; it is a distortion of Christianity, which is the Absolute. But what is it for, then? Is it not just a plague, then? O yes, you may say that too; relatively understood, the Absolute is the greatest plague. In all the languid, lazy, apathetic moments where man is dominated by his sensual nature, Christianity is lunacy to him, because it is incommensurable with a finite “Wherefore?” But what is it for, then? Answer: Be quiet! it is the Absolute. And it *ought* to be represented thus; that is, in such a way that it must appear to the sensual man as lunacy. And therefore it is true; and therefore it is in another sense also so true when the prudent man, in the situation of contemporaneity, gives as his opinion of Christ: “He is *literally nothing*” — certainly; for He is the Absolute. It is as the Absolute that Christianity came into the world, not as a consolation in the human sense of the word, for it is on the contrary continually speaking of how the Christian must suffer, or how a man must, in order to become and to be a Christian, go through sufferings which he can escape if he abstains from becoming a Christian.

There is, in fact, an infinite difference yawning between God and man, and therefore it became evident, in the situation of contemporaneity, that to become a Christian (to be transformed into likeness with God) is, humanly speaking, a still greater misery and pain than any human distress, and, moreover, a crime in the eyes of one's contemporaries.

And it will always prove to be so whenever "to become a Christian" is given the meaning "to become contemporary with Christ." And if "to become a Christian" is not given that meaning, then all this talk about "becoming Christian" is trifling, delusion and vanity, or even blasphemy, and sin against the Second Commandment in the Law, and sin against the Holy Ghost.

For in relation to the Absolute there is only one time : the present ; he who is not contemporary with the Absolute, for him it simply does not exist at all. And since Christ is the Absolute, it is easy to see that in relation to Him there is only one situation : that of contemporaneity. The three, seven, fifteen, seventeen or eighteen centuries since His death make no difference at all, one way or the other ; they alter Him not at all, but neither do they reveal who He was. For Who He is is revealed only to faith. Christ is — and we say this quite seriously — no comedian, nor is He a merely historical personage, since, being the Paradox, He is a highly unhistorical personage. But *contemporaneity* is the difference between poetry and reality. Certainly the difference between poetry and history is, that history is what has *really* happened, while poetry is what is possible, conceivable, imaginable. But what has really happened, *i.e.* the past, is only the real in a certain sense, in contrast, that is, with the fictitious. It lacks the determining quality which is that of truth (as inwardness) and of all religion : the determining quality : *for you*. The past is not reality "for me" ; only the contemporary is reality for me. That with which you are contemporary is reality "for you". And so, every man can become contemporary only with the time in which he is living — and then with something else as well, with Christ's Life on earth ; for Christ's Life on earth, the Sacred History, stands by itself alone, outside history.

About history you can read and hear as a matter of the past ; in that sphere you can, if you choose, judge events according to their result. But in the Life of Christ on earth there is nothing past. It did not wait for the assistance of its results in its own time, 1800 years ago, and it does not do



so now. A historical Christianity is sheer *galimatias* and un-Christian lunacy ; for those in every generation who are truly Christian are contemporary with Christ ; they have nothing to do with the Christians of the preceding generation, but everything to do with the contemporary Christ. His Life on earth attends upon mankind, and upon every generation individually, as the Eternal History ; His Life on earth has eternal contemporaneity. And this fact makes all lecturing about Christianity (lecturing which really has its shelter and support in the assumption that Christianity is something past, which belongs to the history of the past 1800 years), — this fact makes all such lecturing into the most un-Christian of all heresies, as everyone would see, (and therefore give up lecturing), if he only tried to picture to himself the generation contemporary with Christ as — lecturing ! But then *every* generation (of believers) is contemporary with Him.

If you cannot bring yourself to enter into the situation of contemporaneity with Him and so to become a Christian ; or if He cannot, when you are in the situation of contemporaneity, move you and draw you to Him ; then you will never be a Christian. You may, if you please, honour and praise, thank and with all wordly goods reward, anyone who deludes you into the belief that you are a Christian all the same — but he's deceiving you. You may count yourself fortunate that you were not the contemporary of someone who was bold enough to say this ; you may be goaded to frenzy by the torment, which is like the sting of a "gadfly"<sup>1</sup>, of being the contemporary of someone who says it to you : in the first case you are deceived ; in the other case you have at least got to know the truth.

If you cannot bear contemporaneity, if you cannot bear this sight in reality ; if you could not bear to go out into the street, and see — the God in this terrible procession, and realise that that would be your own situation if you fell down and worshipped Him ; then you are not *essentially*

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<sup>1</sup> Plato's *Apology*, 30°

a Christian. What you have to do, in that case, is to acknowledge the fact to yourself so unreservedly that you may above all preserve a due humility, and fear and trembling, towards what it means to be in truth a Christian. For it is by *that* way that you must go, in order to learn and to practise how to flee to grace, in such a way that you do not misuse it. For goodness' sake do not go to somebody to be "soothed." For indeed it is written: "blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see," words with which the parsons are especial'y ready, (strangely enough perhaps also in order to defend a wordly elegance which in that very situation of contemporaneity would be rather incongruous), just as though those words had not been said simply and solely of *those* contemporaries of His Who believed. If His glory had been immediately evident, so that everybody could have seen it without any difficulty, why then it would not be true to say that Christ humbled Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant; and it would be superfluous to give warning against being offended in Him, for how in all the world should one take offence at a glory which is clothed in glory? And how in all the world is one then to explain that it went with Christ as it did; that everybody did not flock up in admiration, to see what was so plainly to be seen?

No; "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him" (*Is. liii. 2.*); plainly there was nothing but an ordinary human creature to be seen, who, by signs and wonders, and by saying He was God, was continually presenting the possibility of offence. An ordinary creature, one, that is, who expressed: 1) what God means by compassion (in which the truth is contained that, if one wants to be compassionate, one must oneself be such a poor ordinary creature); and: 2) what God means by the misery of men; which is in both cases extremely different from what men mean by these things, and which, in every generation until the end of time, every one must learn for himself from the beginning, by beginning right at the same point as every contemporary of Christ, and by practising it in the situation of contempor-

neity. Human impetuosity and unruliness is, of course, of no assistance at all. How far anyone will succeed in becoming essentially a Christian, no man can tell him. But fear and anxiety and despair do not help at all either. Sincerity before God is the first and the last requirement ; sincerity in confessing to oneself what one's position is, sincerity before God in keeping one's eyes steadily upon one's task. However slow one's progress may be, even if one is only creeping forward, — one is at any rate in the right position, and is not being led astray and deceived by the trick of re-fashioning Christ so that He, instead of being God, is made to represent that sentimental compassion which men have invented themselves ; so that Christianity, which ought to draw men to things heavenly, is held up on the way and made into something that is simply and solely human.

#### *The Moral.*

“ And what, then, does all this mean ? ” It means that everyone individually, in silent inwardness before God, is to humble himself, in the realisation of what it really means to be in the strictest sense a Christian ; that he is to confess sincerely before God what his position is, so that he may worthily receive the grace which is offered to every one who is imperfect, that is, to every one. And it means nothing further than that : for the rest, let him attend to his work, rejoicing in it ; let him love his wife, rejoicing in her ; let him bring up his children to be a joy to him ; let him love his fellow-men and enjoy life. If more is to be demanded of him, God will certainly let him know, and will in that case give him further help ; for in the terrible language of the Law this sounds so terrifying, only because it seems as though man himself were in his own strength to hold fast to Christ, whereas in the language of love it is Christ who holds fast to him. If then more is to be demanded of *him*, God will certainly let him know : but this much is demanded of every one, that he humble himself sincerely before God under the demands of ideality. And therefore these demands are to be heard, and heard again and again in all their infinity.

To be a Christian has become a mere nothing and a foolish trick, something that every one is as a matter of course, that one acquires more easily than the most unimportant accomplishment. Truly it is high time that the demands of ideality should be heard.

“ But if the Christian faith and life is something so fearful and terrible, how in all the world can a man get the idea of accepting Christianity ? ” Quite simply, and, if you want that as well, quite according to Luther : only the consciousness of sin can, if I may so say, force one into this terrible thing, — while from the other side the forcing power is grace. And in the same moment the Christian faith and life is transformed, and is sheer mildness, grace, love and mercy. From any other point of view, Christianity is madness, or else the greatest object of terror. Only in the consciousness of sin is approach to be had ; to desire to enter in by any other way is high treason against Christianity.

But sin ; the fact that you are a sinner and I am too ; the individual : — all that has been abolished, or else its price has been reduced in an illegitimate way, both in life — in domestic, civil and ecclesiastical life, — as well as in science ; for science has invented the *doctrine* of sin in general. To make up for that, the attempt has then been made to help men into Christianity, and maintain them in it, by means of all the history of the world, by means of all the idle talk about “ this mild doctrine ”, about “ the heights and the depths ”, about “ a Friend ”, etc., all of which Luther would call sloppiness, and which is blasphemy, since by its means it is desired to fraternise impudently with God and Christ.

Only the consciousness of sin is absolute respect : and just because Christianity demands absolute respect, Christianity must and shall appear from any other point of view as an absurdity or an object of terror, — just in order that the infinite qualitative emphasis may fall upon the fact that only the consciousness of sin is the way of approach, that it alone is the way of looking which, because it expresses absolute respect, can see the mildness and love and mercy of Christianity.



The simple soul, who humbly confesses himself personally as an individual to be a sinner, does not need to know anything at all about all the difficulties which appear when one is neither simple nor humble. But whoever lacks this humble consciousness that he personally (as an individual) is a sinner — yes, even though he should otherwise possess all human wisdom and sagacity and all human gifts : all that will profit him but little. Christianity will accordingly rise up against him and transform itself into an absurdity or object of terror, until he learns, either to give up Christianity, or else, with the aid of the pangs of a penitent conscience (a very different thing from scientific propaedeutics or apologetics etc.), to the extent to which he makes real use of them, to enter into Christianity by the narrow way, through the consciousness of s n.

## EDITOR'S TRAVEL DIARY

International Student Organisations meet in Geneva.

*The annual meeting of the seven international student organisations, held in April at the League of Nations Secretariat, was largely devoted to a consideration of unemployment in relation to the University world. The reports presented by the different organisations, and the masterly introduction to the discussions given by the representative of the International Labour Bureau, left an almost overwhelming impression of the acuteness of the situation. At a time when the old "laissez-faire" policy is almost universally rejected in the purely economic realm, the great majority of countries still follows what Dr. Kolschnig called a policy of "planless education" and thus aggravates the situation of the younger University graduates instead of improving it.*

*We did not find it difficult to agree on the necessity of drastic measures to restrict the effects of unemployment in the so-called learned professions; but we did not find it so easy to formulate a programme of constructive action. For many of the remedies which have been applied, or which are being suggested, are incompatible with the true mission of the University.*

*It is clear that it will be increasingly necessary to restrict the number of University students. The attitude of the Brahmin Vice-Chancellor of an Indian University who said to me: "My mission is to educate, and I am therefore going to educate as many students as I possibly can," is admirable; but it becomes untenable when its practical consequence is the production of an army of young men and women who have been educated for a life which society cannot possibly offer to them. And this is what is actually happening in many countries.*

*But if there must be restriction, on what principle shall it be based? The Committee was unanimous in rejecting a numerus clausus based on considerations of sex, of race or of political attitude. And it expressed the conviction that selection should be based on the sole criterion of intellectual capacity. Other proposals had to do with the better organisation of the labour market for intellectual workers, and with the measures which may be taken to find new places for young University graduates. The final resolution was in many ways an admirable piece of work; and as it went on its journey through the Commissions and Conference rooms of the International Labour Conference, one could only hope that it might help a little in the solving of a tragic problem of student life.*

*But still . . . those of us who represented the Federation felt rather dissatisfied about it all. For after all, had we not given so much time to that rather unprofitable game of "passing the buck" to authorities and governments, that no time was left for consideration of our own very direct responsibility in this matter of unemployment? What is it that makes us all so dangerously impersonal if we enter into the atmosphere of great official organisations? Somehow our student Movements should be able to tackle the problems of the modern world on a spirit which is more in tune with some of the best characteristics of modern youth, that is, by "resolving" more about ourselves and our own responsibility, and less about other people.*

"Stockholm" and "Lausanne" at Hemmen.

*Castle Hemmen, surrounded by the quietest kind of scenery which one can imagine — the meadows and fruit-trees of the Dutch "Beluwe" — seemed almost too much of an anachronism to serve as the setting for discussions about the dynamic and totalitarian tendencies of modern nationalism and its challenge to the Christian Church. But the little group of delegates consisted of men who are all in some way or another engaged in the battle; and so there was no danger of lack of realism.*

*This was the second of the small study conferences of the Life and Work Movement devoted to the problem of Church and State. It was presided over by Max Huber, one of the very few active politicians of international reputation who has thought through what it means to be a Christian in international politics. And it included a number of laymen as well as theologians of various countries.*

*"Stockholm" is making remarkable progress! For this sort of thorough confrontation of Christian leaders and thinkers of different schools with one another is of greater value for the oecumenical cause than large numbers of administrative or demonstrative conferences. Again this is part of a continual process of common study, the results of which are carefully worked out and transmitted to other national and international groups, and the goal of which is the Life and Work Conference in 1937.*

*We have often been tempted to despair when we realised the immensity of the task of the Life and Work Movement and the inadequacy of its work — but it would seem that the recent challenge which has come to the Christian world through the German Church conflict, and the less acute but equally serious conflicts in other countries, have had the most fortunate result of giving new vitality to this Movement, and of making it the pioneer body of the Churches in the realm of social and political ethics.*

*For our own Movement this development has very great significance. In our search for greater unity in our attitude to the forces which shape the modern world, and in our attempt to give more definite guidance to students in matters of Christian action, we will no longer feel that we must depend on our own work alone. We have now a "big brother" to whom we can look for help when the situation becomes critical.*

*The Stockholm meeting was followed by the meeting of the Executive Committee of the "Lausanne" Movement for Faith and Order. Was it the very great difference in age between the majority of members of this Committee and the author of this Diary, that made "Lausanne" seem so much less aware of present day realities? Or is this rather due to the inherent difficulty of the problem of Church Reunion? However this may be, my impression was that "Lausanne" is at present in a rather dangerous situation. The main problem is, not that there is so little real progress towards Church Unity (for who dares to expect much immediate and visible progress in that delicate and complicated area?), but rather that there is so little certainly about the procedure to be followed, and that there is so little steady and thorough spade work being done. In these circumstances the next World Conference, also to be held in 1937, becomes a somewhat risky adventure. We must hope that the next two years will still be used for the kind of preparatory study and thinking which alone can justify the holding of a World Conference of such importance.*

*Here again our own work is affected; for in the long run the strength of our oecumenical work will depend on the achievements of the Churches in thought and action through such bodies as Faith and Order.*

#### Preparing for the Summer Campaign.

*This is not much of a Travel Diary, for in view of the exceptionally heavy programme which the Federation has to carry out this summer, I have had to spend more time in Geneva than in any other three months period of the last few years. Staying in Geneva does not, however, mean to be cut off from all contact with the wide world. It is curious how even the somewhat less brilliantly international Geneva of to-day remains a place of international pilgrimage. Visitors from Mexico, Burma, Japan and China, have come to tell about the Student Movements in their countries. There has been a constant stream of friends from European countries. And Fay Campbell of the American S.C.M. and Denzil Patrick of the British S.C.M., who have come to help at Federation Headquarters, have brought a bit of their countries with them.*



*And if there is any danger of losing touch with students, there are the Swiss students to call one back to the University world. Bible study evenings at Geneva, retreats and meetings at Pully, Beinwil and Neuchâtel, have been welcome bits of "real" work between the periods of dangerously "unreal" work of writing, organising and correspondence.*

*And now, as most people dream of holidays, the Federation gets ready for its busiest period of the year. On paper, that means simply another series of conferences. But in reality it means that the Federation gets another opportunity to come out of the atmosphere of relative invisibility in which it must move for such long periods, and to manifest its existence. The Federation is human, and therefore it wants to feel that it is alive. But to live is not enough. At Swanwick in July, at Chamcoria in Bulgaria in August, and at Basle in September, the Federation should not merely live, but live meaningfully. And that means, for it as well as for its members, to serve and to obey.*

V. 'T H.

## THE STUDENT WORLD CHRONICLE

### Russia in Foreign Lands

*The following article by Professor L. Zander, of the Russian Student Christian Movement in Emigration, was written for The Student World issue on " Eastern Orthodox Nations ", but received too late for publication in that number. It is published here as a very valuable addition to the description of trends of life and thought in the Eastern Orthodox world.*

#### *Those Who are Passing Away.*

The older generation of the Russian emigration is passing. In Russian centres one sees hair a little whiter, backs a little more bent with every year that passes. This process is seen most clearly in cemeteries where there are special Russian sections. Such sections are growing with an amazing rapidity. And it is not merely individuals who are being buried there. The Russia of yesterday, with all her moral grandeur, with all her spiritual culture, has found her tragic resting-place in the cemeteries of the West.

What can we say in memory of the departed ? Exile is a terrible trial. It throws men out of their place in life ; it transfers them into an entirely new, sometimes an intolerable setting. In the new environment, the ties between the generations are broken : a father is no longer the father of his children in the full sense of the word ; he has neither the experience, nor the strength, nor the power ; he cannot teach his children, or provide the necessities of life to them, nor can he help them in any way. He and his children are equals — comrades in misfortune, in the struggle for livelihood, in the hopelessness of their common future. Teachers — they have nothing to teach ; leaders — have nowhere to lead to. All of them are "*ci-devant* ", and therein lies their tragedy. But it must be said that the great majority of the Russian exiles have passed this severe test, and passed it with honours. This was a test of the dignity of human personality, of its spiritual kernel, if one may so say. A well-known Russian criminologist, commenting upon prisons, once remarked that prison showed up immediately the true essence of a man, and

revealed whether there was any real spiritual material in him, or merely rubbish. Exile may be compared with prison in this respect. It can be truly said that the majority of the exiles have not "lost face." Their environment was changed; circumstances became so altered, that men of great power, influence and experience became humble artisans, shopworkers, office clerks. Yet these new conditions have not told on their dignity and personal worth.

### *The Second Generation.*

Several years ago, one had to speak in entirely different terms about the younger generation. It may be said that the present younger generation differs from that of a few years ago as if it belonged to an entirely different nation. The reason is simple enough: those who are now twenty years old left Russia when they were but three years old; those who are twenty-five left when they were eight. Contemporary *émigré* youth has not seen Russia and does not know it. In this they greatly differ from the young people of five or ten years ago. That part of the second generation which does remember Russia may be described by the verses of the Russian poet Alexander Blok, a wonderful writer who may be said to have expressed the very soul of the tragic years of Russia. As long ago as 1914 he wrote: "Born in tragic years, we do not recall our path; we are the children of terrible years of Russia; we can forget nothing. O burning years! Is there a message of hope in you, or the message of madness?"

The spiritual destiny of that generation is truly tragic. It remembers the dark side of old Russia too well to be able to idealise the world of the past and to cherish romantic dreams of its restoration. On the other hand, it knows former Russia too well to be over-enthusiastic about the "achievements" reached in the capital, achievements which in the old days were the property of any big provincial town. It has been bred in a given culture, has seen a life which is no longer and which will never return (just as the Versailles of *le Roi Soleil*, or the Weimar of Goethe, will never return). It is a true anachronism, and its tragedy lies in its not being sufficiently old simply to fade out, not sufficiently tired out and exhausted to live merely its personal life...

It is to this generation that we are indebted for most of the values created by the *émigrés* in exile. During the last ten years, more has been done to enable Europe to understand Russia than during the 100 years before the Revolution. If nowadays the West is no longer merely studying Russia as something exotic, but is daily meeting with Russia in its cultural work, this is because of the

thousands of Russian scientists, painters, artists, lawyers and many others, whose destiny it is to work on foreign soil.

"How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" the Hebrew exiles once exclaimed. These words are used in the Orthodox Church Service: the Russian emigration has brought with it its prayers and songs, its nostalgia and its joy — the mysterious soul of Russia. It is with special power that the further words of the psalm-writer come home to the Russian exiles: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem..."

### *The Romantics.*

What are the decisive factors in the life of the younger generation? They never knew Russia. Russia, however, is by no means a meaningless word for them. On the contrary. Never before did Russian youth think of and feel for Russia so warmly, so passionately as now. But what is Russia for them? What do they see in her? What do they love in her? The answer is contained in one word, perhaps the most powerful, the most active of all the words in the human vocabulary: *a dream*. They live surrounded by living souvenirs: by their fathers and mothers, by fragments remaining from the old order of life, by talismans of the old, as it were. All this — so close to their heart, so intimate to them — has been shattered and destroyed. Furthermore, in the Western life that surrounds them, there is going on the storm of economic crisis. Life is hard, severe, often cruel, often disgusting. The dream of a better life shines especially brightly against that sombre background. The past seems to be free from all the shortcomings of the present. They can say of Russia the words of « *la princesse lointaine* »: "I love thee, oh, my beautiful sadness, my clear-eyed princess, my beautiful far-away dream. . . ."

This is really the basis of their life: Russia as a store-house of all that is good, well-ordered, plentiful. The past is for them a paradise lost; and life is a struggle for the restoration of that paradise. The contemporary West is the antithesis to Russia, the contrary of what ought to be. Thus we see the birth of a romantic nationalism, which is a characteristic trait of some of the Russian youth. Romanticism is really a very stimulating attitude to life; and Russian youth is showing very intense activity. There are numerous organisations, study and other circles, wherever Russian youth is found. Some years ago such organisations would be formed on the initiative of the fathers, and the younger people would be invited to join; nowadays youth itself is active in this regard, and puts into it all the



passion characteristic of youth generally, and all the fanaticism characteristic of our epoch, all the primitivism in ideology and methods so general in our times.

*Facing Russian Reality.*

Along with that section of Russian youth in exile which dreams of the past, there are others — those whose enthusiasm is directed towards the present. In the vast garden of the love of Motherland there blossom different flowers, and along with white lilies we find red roses, the flowers of revolution, new life, new hope. Yet they are roses set about with thorns : for these young people, while accepting the Revolution, reject Communism ; accepting present-day Russia, they reject its present form. This type of ideology is very subtle, and has a variety of shades. The majority call themselves “ post-revolutionary ”, as against the “ old régime ”, as well as against the so-called “ White Movement ” of the Counter-revolution.

What are the characteristics of this movement ? They may briefly be described as follows : Revolution is accepted as a norm and as a fact. The old world outlived itself ; the democratic order is in a state of decomposition ; capitalism is leading into economic blind-alleys ; parliamentarism is becoming politically absurd. Something new must arise. This new order will differ greatly from the old, and of course should belong to the “ October ” order of things, and not to the “ February ” order ; for the revolution of February 1917 brought about nothing new, but attempted merely to instal in Russia the antiquated bourgeois democratic system in place of the Oriental Byzantine autocracy, whereas October 1917 brought in a “ new world ”, even if only because its aim was to bring about “ a new life. ”

In this sense revolution is accepted as a norm, as something that was bound to come and that must not be rejected in the future. However, revolution is also a fact. It is here that we discover the real difficulties of this ideology ; for even ordinary common sense would not allow itself to be reconciled with a system under which whole classes of society are dying of starvation, which is ruining the country, — facts which cannot be explained away as due merely to defects of the administrative apparatus. The only way out of this contradiction lies in a careful study of what is happening in Russia, and a thorough sifting out of all that is true and valuable from the “ rubbish of the epoch. ” This is the main aim and task of the “ post-revolutionary ” young people, who want to build the future as a continuation of the present, who love Russia in her

revolutionary aspect, and who seek to distinguish various strata in the Communist *régime*, separating its true values from the defects which must be eliminated. The characteristics of this group of the younger generation are : a love of Russia not less ardent than that of the "romantics," a good knowledge of what is going on in Russia, a thorough study of the processes going on there. Their position is, however, a difficult one. In the eyes of the present rulers of Russia they are still true enemies, *émigrés*, "whites" (for the present rulers of Russia consider as enemies all those who will not enslave themselves entirely to their doctrine and practice); their situation within the emigration is also a delicate one, for there are many who call them semi-bolshevists, traitors, etc. In the historical context, however, this group is perhaps the most significant one; for its whole attention is directed toward the creative task of building up the future, not upon abstract ideals, not upon memories of the past, but out of the rough and ungrateful material which is provided by this historical moment.

### *Is Russian émigré Youth really Russian ?*

It is quite possible to be an idealist and fanatic, and yet to know but poorly one's own mother-tongue; it is possible to dream of a new life, and yet to be closely tied to the old life. Thus, parallel to the romantic nationalism described in one of the preceding sections, one may observe a process of denationalization in some of the Russian youth. There are people who quite consciously cease being Russian, who want to be identified with their present environment, who lose themselves in foreign life. They are a minority, and they do not count, for they are but dry leaves torn off by the tempest; they will produce no new life, and on the scale of history they are but dust... However, they are not the only ones to be involved in the process of denationalization; that process affects true patriots also. This is especially apparent when one meets young Russians from France, from Germany, from America, and from other lands. Each one of them clearly bears the marks of the country he lives in, the imprints of its culture and general order of life struggling against the Russian essence in him. In some cases this is but a superficial change, like *rouge* used for the lips in order to "look like everybody else"; but sometimes such foreign influences penetrate into the depths of human personality, deeply changing it. In this process of denationalization, Russian youth is much more an object than a subject. The stronger, the better, the higher, the more humanistic the environmenting culture, the more it denationalizes a Russian youth who has

nothing to oppose to that alien goodness. And *vice versa* : the poorer the environment, the weaker the influences competing with his own traditions, the stronger becomes the call of blood, the greater the desire to preserve his own traditions. This desire is especially fostered by the local chauvinism, xenophobia, oppression of all that is Russian which occur in countries where Russian culture is a force and where it is feared. Of course, general environment plays a great part in preserving Russian personality. Youth living in countries where there is a Russian national minority, or large colonies of the Russian *émigrés*, preserve it better than those who are isolated in a foreign environment. The school, the Army, the Church play an important part in this process. It is difficult to generalize. There are no exact statistics. In national life, quantities are of secondary importance. In the future destinies of Russia, one man who has preserved his Russian heart may play a greater part than thousands who have lost it.

#### *General Notes.*

What is the attitude of youth to religion, to Christianity ? It varies with the different groups. With the romantics, this attitude too is slightly romantic. In Russian history, the Church has been a positive and constructive factor. Therefore many think of the Church as of something inseparable from Russia's past, and love the Church as a remnant of the past. The "post-revolutionaries" cling to the Church as the martyred Church of the present. Yet the eternal Church does not depend upon *régimes* and revolutions. There are young people who have discovered the Church as a concretisation of Christianity, and who are not only preserving for themselves all that is most sacred in their hearts, but also saving for the future those seeds of the eternal which were in the past of Russia, and which are in her present Church.

There is one *trait*, acquired by Russian youth in the West, which strangely enough blends with the romanticism of some of them — a "business-like", industrious quality, a capability to give one's utmost in the struggle of life. Life is so severe, its demands are so great, that it takes a tremendous effort to acquire and maintain one's place in the dense crowd of competitors. In this respect the Russian young people have shown miracles of industry, application, discipline and thrift. To this fact, testimony is borne by rectors of Universities, heads of high schools, etc.

Russian youth has, of course, all the qualities peculiar to contemporary youth everywhere. Never before was the break between

the older and the younger generation, " the fathers and the sons, " so profound as nowadays, in our " twilight of the gods, " which is so often taken for the collapse of the West. This is especially true of the Russians. The young people despise the generation of their " fathers, " and accuse it of failure to preserve Russia ; for the young do not understand that the very tragedy of destiny is that it cannot be escaped, that the older generation was helpless before the *Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin* pronounced on the Empire. A logical consequence of this contempt is a blind and arrogant self-assurance, belief in themselves, in their own powers, in the rightness of the path they are taking. This path may not be new, and its ideology may not be original ; but it is their own, and that is the most important thing to them. This self-assurance is common to all young people of all countries in our time.

Our times are so " concentrated " that the experience of one month is often equivalent to a year's experience in the old days. The young are no pupils, no novices, no beginners in life ; they know much, have gone through much, and are so businesslike and practical that the older generation might really often learn from them ! However, experience of life does not necessarily deepen the soul. The youth of our day is often so elementary, so ignorant, that we may truly have to begin to speak of " the new Middle Ages. " The barbarians whose time of power came after Rome were also full of hope, energy and self-assurance.

*Those who are still to come.*

This generation of youth will pass. What will become of those who are children today ? It is still too early to give an answer. One thing, however, may be said even now. Most of them are — foreigners, who do not know the tongue of their fathers, and who identify themselves with the country they live in. Yet even among them there is a minority in which there lives an almost incomprehensible love for Russia. In really strong Russian families (where such still exist), close contact with the Church, and the voice of Russian blood make this miracle possible. A four-year-old youngster, who has never seen anywhere but Paris, said, recalling a past which never was : " Mummy, how wonderful it was when I was with you in Russia ! — Everybody spoke Russian, and all the toys were there. "



## Lessons from Student Christian Movement History

*These last years have brought a rich harvest of books on Student Christian Movement history. It is therefore a timely undertaking to review these various publications together, in order to draw some general conclusions and lessons from them. Few friends of the Federation could have done this better than W. W. Gethman, General Secretary of the World's Alliance of Y.M.C.A.s, and a former student secretary, who is at the same time sufficiently detached to see our work objectively and sufficiently in touch with Christian Movements in many countries to understand the spirit of the national Movements.*

The Spirit of God is again working mightily in the Universities of the world. Not since the closing years of the last century, which saw the birth of Student Christian Movements in North America, in the Far East, and in so many of the European countries, have students been so receptive to the life-transforming, sacrifice-demanding Gospel message as they are today.

The human explanation for this new situation is simple indeed. The absolute domination of the whole of life by science has suddenly been as completely broken as was its absolute domination by theology two centuries ago. Our most able intellectual leaders tell us there can be no further question of a "science" of economics, or a "science" of politics, or a "science" of sociology, because the human factor in each is too large, and because this factor does not submit itself either to scientific calculation or to scientific manipulation. The thoughtful student recognizes that other values and forces, even though they may be less tangible than those he has come to know in the realm of pure science, must be brought to bear on the human element if we are to find a way out of the present chaos.

For the Church and all its instruments this has a double meaning. It is a call to service and an offer of service. The field of evangelism today is the field from which will come the volunteers of tomorrow. The leadership for the great forward movements of the past has to a surprising degree come from the Universities, and this will be true to an even larger measure in the advances of the future. The nature and power of the next great advance of the forces of Christianity will be determined by the way in which they respond during the next few years to the challenges the Universities are just now throwing out to them.

Some leaders, both in the Churches and in the related Movements, have long been conscious of these facts, and aware of the significance

and strategy of Christian work in the student field, but for many it has been a world apart. The appearance within recent months of a number of historical works has made the full facts of the situation available for the first time ; and every leader in any way related to the world-wide Christian enterprise will want, not only to acquaint himself with the work of the Student Christian Movements which most immediately concern him, but to re-examine his relationship to them and perhaps his responsibility toward them.

It will be impossible in a brief survey of this kind to review, or even to catalogue, all the recent literature bearing on this question. Brief references to the distinctive characteristics and contributions of a few of the most representative Student Christian Movements should, however, offer conclusive evidence of the strategical importance of the student field for every arm of the Church. One is impressed, as one studies the records, with the degree to which the movements for Church unity within the nations, and the growing collaboration of the forces of Christianity of all the nations, have their origins in the work and experience of the Student Christian Movement. In every country in which it has come into being, the Student Christian Movement has, however, made some significant and distinctive contribution which may be suggestive for some other areas ; hence a brief survey of the outstanding accomplishments of each of the Movements whose work is recorded in the volumes reviewed below may be rewarding.

The story of the evolution of small but intensely religious student Christian groups into the Norwegian Student Christian Movement which is related in Fjellbu's KRISTELIG STUDENTERLIV I NORGE had its counterpart in each of the Scandinavian countries. Records show the existence of Student Christian societies as early as the beginning of the 19th century ; but the religious revivals of the second half of the century resulted in the formation of many new groups of students "for prayer, Bible Study and practical Church work." By 1890 groups of this kind established in Norway, Denmark and Sweden had already found a common platform in the Northern Student Conferences, which at the beginning were held every other year. It was immediately after the Northern Conference held in Sweden in 1895 that the World's Student Christian Federation was founded. While joining in the biennial conferences, each of the Scandinavian countries created its own National Student Christian Movement. All these movements were powerfully influenced by Kierkegaard, the Danish theologian whose writings have again been widely read in recent years.

From the first, the life of these associations was permeated with the idea of missions. The Norwegian Student Movement organized its own Missionary Conference in 1889, and this phase of its work was still further stressed as a result of the visit of Robert Wilder in 1892. This Movement was represented by 12 delegates at the Liverpool Missionary Conference held under the auspices of the British Student Movement in 1896. The reports of the delegation returning from this conference resulted in a new revival, which expressed itself concretely in the founding of a Student Volunteer Movement and in the establishment of work for Secondary School students. One wonders whether a Christian Movement could have gripped the imagination of students of this and other countries as it did without the challenge of a great cause like that of missions.

Other Movements had such a decisive influence both on the organizational and spiritual development of the Northern Movements that Fjellbu has seen fit to designate the last decade of the previous century and the beginning years of the present century as the "Anglo-Saxon Period." The visits of Robert Wilder, Donald Fraser, Ruth Rouse, and John R. Mott all made deep impressions. Dr. Mott's influence has continued to this day.

But a reaction, which had its origins in a growing nationalism, or perhaps only in a change of spiritual atmosphere, finally set in in the years just preceding the world-war. In Sweden, the reaction took the form of a Youth Movement which was outspoken in support of Church and nation, and from Sweden this spirit spread to the other northern countries. It resulted in a shifting of student interest from world-wide to internal questions. In a way it became a period of religious, intellectual, and social self-examination.

The post-war years saw a re-awakening of interest in things international, which expressed itself in relief efforts and in idealistic discussions; but interest in these questions died out as suddenly as it had appeared, and the disillusionment which followed brought in a series of radical movements, social, political and religious. As was the case in other areas, this tendency was soon followed by the larger emphasis on science and psychology, and the increasing secularization of every phase of life. Today, Youth is demanding *authority* in Church as well as in politics. But it must in every case be an authority based on that which has been found true in history and in personal experience.

This brief tabulation of the post-war thought-pilgrimage of the intellectuals of one of the most stable groups in the world — a group which was not directly affected by the war — gives a conservative picture of the intellectual, moral, and religious confusion into which

the chaos of the War and post-War years has thrown this world in which we live. This is a situation which demands "the divine of the Christian faith and Christian ethic"; and no area of life is so ripe for this message as that of our Universities.

MILITIA CHRISTI, a volume edited by Hanns Lilje, one of the best known of the younger religious leaders of Germany, and published in 1928 on the occasion of the 70th birthday of Dr. Michaelis, former chancellor of the German Reich and life-long friend of the German Student Christian Movement, not only tells the story of the welding together of scattered, differently constituted, struggling Student Christian groups into a National Federation, but describes the peculiar function the Student Movement was called upon to render in bridging the everwidening gulf between the Church and the academic world. The Bible-Study group which was the sole activity of the original student societies rendered an invaluable service to a limited number of thoroughly committed students; but not until the Student Conference, with its challenging Christian messages designed specifically to meet the problems and concerns of the intellectuals, came into being did the Student Movement become a determining influence in the life of the Universities of Germany. Through it, students were faced with new challenges, and a new type of leadership began to offer itself to the Church at home and abroad.

Because the German Mission Societies already had well established missionary recruiting and training policies before the Student Movement came into being, the German Student Christian Movement never exercised an influence on missions comparable with that exerted by the Student Movements of the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian areas. Those who were to relate the Churches of Germany to the Oecumenical World Movements were, however, trained almost without exception in the Student Movement. Men like Siegmund-Schultze, Karl Heim, Reinhold von Thadden, Paul Humburg, Erich Stange, Hanns Lilje, Hermann Weber, Joachim Müller, and Karl von Prosch, who are widely known in international Christian circles, may all be said to be products of the Student Christian Movement.

Another book which is essential to a real understanding of the genius of the German Student Movement is *Regem Habemus*, which was edited by Udo Smidt and published in 1925. The value of this book lies in the fact that it throws much light on the struggle which went on in that Movement, in the years just following the world-war, between the group which advocated the adoption of a policy of vague idealism similar to that which was being followed by the



general German Youth Movement of the day, and those who insisted on maintaining the primacy of the spiritual mission of the Movement, declaring that a Movement of this kind could maintain its distinctiveness and usefulness only in so far as it limited its direct concern with social, international and related issues in keeping with the spiritual resources at its disposal. The soundness of the second position, which eventually prevailed in that struggle, may be judged from the fact that in these recent years much of the most able leadership in the struggle for religious liberty in Germany has been supplied by the Student Christian Movement. Those Christian Movements which are unclear about the relative importance of the truly "prophetic" and the purely "idealistic" in their emphasis and programme will do well to study this chapter in the history of the German Student Christian Movement.

In his survey of the history and ideals of the British Student Movement, which was published in 1933 under the title : *THE STORY OF THE STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT*, Dr. Tissington Tatlow gives us the revealing, intimate type of interpretation that can come only from one who has been at the heart of a Movement whose accomplishments are recorded, not in brick and mortar, but in the hearts and lives of men and women scattered literally over the face of the earth.

As one goes over the pages of this biographical volume, one is impressed with the degree to which the Movement was helped especially in the beginning years by leaders of other National Movements, and by the way in which those Movements were in turn inspired by leaders of the British Movement. One wonders, for example, whether Mott would have been led into his world-influencing life of Christian leadership, had it not been for the timely visits of Drummond and Studd, and one wonders at the same time whether the British Movement could have become a nation-wide influence so quickly without the help of Moody, Wilder, Mott and Speer.

That the Movement was aggressively missionary from the beginning is revealed by the fact that its first public event was the International Students' Missionary Conference, which was held in Liverpool in 1896. Judging by its influence, not only on British missions but on the University centres of the continent, and finally on the whole world missionary enterprise centres of the continent, and finally on the whole world missionary enterprise, this conference must be considered one of the important events in the life of the Christian Church of our day. By bringing together the growing missionary interests of the students and the sending bodies of the Churches, it ushered in a period of rapid expansion; and by its

unification of the unrelated missionary agencies of the British Isles, it prepared the way for the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910, and thus laid the foundations for the establishment of the International Missionary Council, which has brought into helpful cooperative relationships the missionary undertakings of practically all of the Protestant Churches of the world, and established a real bond of fellowship between the new Churches and the old.

The chapters on "Students and the Church" and "Church Unity" should be read by the responsible Church leaders of every land. Perhaps only those who have been long associated with students will understand the full meaning of the observation that "the Church should not be afraid of making big demands. . . . It is the challenge of the Cross we must present. But let us not ask men and women to wear themselves out, or bear the Cross for futile or inadequate ends." His remarks about the Lausanne Conference on *Faith and Order* throw revealing light on the origins of the growing Movement for cooperation between the Churches and more basic unity: "I met at the Lausanne Conference old Student Movement leaders from England, Ireland, Scotland, India, China, Russia, Hungary, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, France, Germany, Switzerland, Australia, and the United States of America. Among them were arch-bishops, bishops, priests, ministers and professors, and they represented Anglican, Orthodox, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Congregational, Methodist, and Baptist Churches, also the Society of Friends. I met none who were not helpful and competent members of the conference." Bishop Brent, who became the chairman of the Conference, became deeply concerned about the need for the re-establishment of the unity of the Church of Christ during Student Movement days, and worked incessantly from 1912 to 1927 for the Church Council which was finally convened at Lausanne.

Other chapters deal just as convincingly with the Movement's concern with great general issues like religious education, social problems, and international relations. Anyone at all acquainted with those who occupy positions of leadership throughout the British Empire cannot but be impressed with the degree to which whole areas of life have been influenced, and in many cases given direction, by the Student Christian Movement. Throughout the book one is conscious of the tremendous cost of the war — the loss of a generation of leaders and, what is equally devastating for the Christian Church, the wholesale destruction of those more subtle ideals and values which it will take generations to re-discover and to re-establish.

Professor Shedd's TWO CENTURIES OF CHRISTIAN STUDENT MOVEMENTS, which represents a life-time of patient

study, carries the story of the North American Student Christian Associations from the days of the scattered independent Student Christian Societies founded in the early years of the 18th century, through the period of the establishment of the Intercollegiate Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations in 1877 and 1886 respectively, to their sharing in the founding of the World's Student Christian Federation in 1895 and their ever increasing participation in the work of the world-wide Student Christian Movement.

His description of the steps which led to the founding of separate Movements for men and women should offer much valuable material to those who are again examining the merits of joint work for men and women, as over against the present arrangement, which implies at least an organizational separation; and his discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of collaboration with non-student groups, which have revealed themselves in the fifty years during which the Intercollegiate Young Men's Christian Association has functioned as a Division enjoying varying degrees of autonomy within the General Movement, should prove exceedingly helpful to those who are responsible for the re-examination of this relationship at this time.

The chapters which describe in detail the spread of the Student Christian Movements into practically every higher institution of learning in North America will bring much of interest and value to every one in any way responsible for the difficult but highly multiplying task of maintaining a vital religious life in college and University centres; and that part of the book which deals with the creation of the Student Volunteer Movement, and the evolution of the summer student conferences, will be eagerly read by all those who are in any way related to the modern missionary movement. One may well ask whether there was, in the life of the North America of 1885 to 1915, any other influence comparable with that of the annual summer conferences of the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations and the quadrennial meetings of the Student Volunteer Movement. Certainly North America's participation in the missionary crusade of the last half century can be understood only as one comes to know, through personal contact with some of those who experienced it, or through the pages of a book like Dr. Shedd's, something of the working of the Spirit of God during those days through personalities like Dwight L. Moody, Henry Drummond, Robert and Grace Wilder, John R. Mott, Robert E. Speer, Bishop McDowell and many others.

This volume is to be followed by another, which is to deal entirely with the chaotic post-war period, which was dominated by attitudes

and forces the real nature of which is only now becoming evident. The concluding chapter should be considered only a very tentative statement regarding the work and development of the Movement during this period.

In his STUDENT RELIGION DURING FIFTY YEARS, Dr. Morgan gives us an analysis of the changing programme-emphasis of the Student Division of the North American Young Men's Christian Association from the time of its establishment as a national movement in 1877 to the present day.

The period from 1877 to 1890, he points out, was dominated by a strong emphasis on Bible Study for personal work, student deputations for evangelism, public evangelistic efforts in the colleges and Universities, and a growing sense of responsibility of students for the evangelization of the world.

The period from 1890 to 1910 was characterized by its promotion of *daily systematic* Bible Study, an intensive promotion of mission studies, increased emphasis on public evangelism, the institution of social service, and the acceptance of responsibilities of services to students which gave the Student Christian Associations an acknowledged place in most higher institutions of learning.

The period from 1910 to 1917, which took much of its inspiration from the growing Social Gospel Movement, and which is referred to as the epoch of increased social emphasis, saw the development of a deeper interest in the negro problem, social evangelism, sex education, and related issues. Because so many present-day non-American writers are inclined to judge the religious history of North America solely by post-war patterns, Dr. Morgan's carefully documented analysis of the changes of religious emphasis during the last half century should make his work as valuable for the sincere student of Church history as for the Student Christian Movement leader who is interested primarily in improving the programme of his student association.

But the greatest value of Dr. Morgan's book lies in its frank recognition of the almost overwhelming influence of post-war thought-tendencies and attitudes on the Student Christian Movement. Whether the adjustment of its programme and methods to what appeared to be the majority demands of the day will finally be adjudged the best Christian statesmanship, only the historian who can study the period with a better perspective will be able to determine. The Church as a whole is only beginning to realize the extent to which its thinking and acting has been influenced and altered by the erratic and pathological urges and demands of one of the most



chaotic periods in human history; and the time has come when its responsible leaders should detach themselves long enough to enable them to make an objective examination and evaluation of its actions and developments during the war and post-war years. One wishes, as one reads the author's brief references to these influences and developments, that he might have dealt with them a little more fully, and that he might have given something approaching a profit-and-loss statement, showing the net results of these influences on the life and programme of the Student Christian Movements of North America.

But what may eventually be considered the most timely document published by the World Movement or any of its affiliated bodies since the world-war is a little pamphlet of thirty-one pages on STUDENT EVANGELISM which has just been produced at the Office of the Federation in Geneva. The booklet, which carries a foreword from the pen of Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, is a study of the methods used in recent months in public evangelistic efforts carried on in University centres as far apart as Paris and Riga, Oxford and Shanghai. The meetings described are not cosy little "inside" events, but bold approaches to the general Student bodies, which in most of our Universities are made up of men and women who are just recovering from the stupor into which they were thrown by the disillusionment, discouragement and despair of the war and post-war years, and who are beginning to be seriously concerned with the problem of building a philosophy which deals more realistically with all the facts and conditions of human life. One cannot read this series of brief reports without feeling that something of tremendous significance to the whole of Christianity is beginning to happen in the Universities of the world.

This is a challenge which concerns, not only one arm of the Church, but the whole of it. But it does not mean the opening of the Universities to the separate and diversified approach of a disunited Church. Nothing would more quickly bring new disillusionment to a generation of searching students. If the forces of Christianity can enter upon this new opportunity under the leadership of a truly spiritualized Christian statesmanship, which can rise above petty interests, our Universities may experience anew the meaning of the Lordship of Christ, and we may actually witness the coming into being of that Christian Community for which men and women everywhere are increasingly craving, that Community which is the only instrument through which God works in this world, and without which the individual members of His body will continue to be impotent in a world dominated by other "communities."

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### The French S.C.M. speaks on Conscientious Objection and Student Evangelism

The following extracts from the very rich report presented by the General Secretary of the French S.C.M., Charles Westphal, to the National Conference at Marseilles, give a vivid impression of the problems and achievements of the S.C.M. in France, and contain valuable hints for S.C.M.s in other countries. The reference in the second paragraph is to Jacques Martin and Philippe Vernier, two members of the French S.C.M. who have refused military service and are imprisoned at Marseilles.

#### *Conscientious objection*

It was with great joy that we took the decision to hold this Conference at Marseilles; first, because that meant that our Marseilles branch, after some years of precarious and struggling existence, had become sufficiently solidly established to take part in the reception of the Congress, and to reap the benefit of it thereafter; and secondly, because we have at Marseilles many old members and friends who have given us many proofs of their fidelity and confidence, and to whom we are happy to show our gratitude by coming to share with them the experience of our Conference.

Nevertheless — this must be said, and I beg that it may be heard without prejudice — our joy in being at Marseilles is not unmixed. Our heart is wrung when we think of our two friends who are imprisoned here, and when we think of the unhappy divisions which have been occasioned, in one church after another, and among so many of our friends, by the propaganda carried on about conscientious objectors. After much hesitation (because feeling runs so high on both sides that one runs the risk of aggravating misunderstandings every time one touches on this subject), I have none the less believed it to be my duty to recall once again our position in this debate. You will not be astonished at this. It has never been our method to keep silence on burning questions; and in a world rent asunder by so many antagonistic "totalitarianisms", the S.C.M. is perhaps the last place where the attempt is made to confide in one another, and where complete liberty of expression is possible.

We are always running up against two accusations — which, moreover, contradict one another. Some friends maintain that we are the "spiritual home" of the objectors, and reproach us with

encouraging a propaganda which they adjudge to be criminal. And other friends reproach us, on the contrary, with doing nothing for the objectors, and, as they say, "casting them off." To the first we reply :

1) that the two prisoners at Marseilles are indeed beloved members of the Movement, and that it is needless to say that we will not for the world deny them ;

2) that the S.C.M., as a *Christian* Association, accepts and groups together students of all opinions, their sole uniting principle being faith in Jesus Christ ; that, as a *Student* Association, it practises respect of all loyally-held convictions, accepts the risk which the conflict of ideas brings with it, and places its confidence in the omnipotence of truth ;

3) that as regards the *idea* of conscientious objection, the Federation has never made, and will not make, propaganda for a particular conception which is contestable as well from a religious as from a political point of view, and which is moreover contested by the majority among us ;

4) that as far as the *person* of the objectors is concerned, we think that every Christian ought to feel himself obliged to respect men who are ready to suffer so severely for their convictions, and to exert himself to bring it about that the law, which is so merciful towards so-called "passionate" assassins and towards large-scale swindlers, may not keep its "maximum penalties" for the partisans of non-violence. There is an intolerable anomaly in the present position.

And to those who accuse us of "doing nothing" for the objectors, we reply :

1) that we did not in fact desire to issue a petition demanding their release, because we believe that there is no more false and less useful action. It is false, because it costs nothing, and because it is too easy to salve one's conscience by signing a petition, imagining that thus one has acted ! It is useless, because it is too easy, (as we have, alas, ascertained), to oppose petition to petition, and thus to aggravate a cruel division without profit to anyone. It is false and useless, further, because to demand the release of the objectors is evidence of complete failure to understand their action, and because to ask a government not to apply the law is evidence of complete failure to understand its responsibility ;

2) that we have "acted" all the same for the objectors, for their persons and not for their ideas : first of all, by the reiterated applica-



tions (far more useful than any petitions) made by our president, M. Boegner, to the public authorities, for the obtaining of a legal solution; then, by the simple fact that in all circumstances we ask that Christians should respect them, and that the call to repentance should be heard which their action must mean for all; lastly, there is perhaps an action of love and prayer..., but of that we cannot speak; it is a secret which belongs to nobody but God.

That is the point of view of the S.C.M., formulated as briefly and as simply as I can. We do not think that our definitions will, "reassure" all our friends. But that is not what we are trying to do. Beside the Churches and beside the parties, the S.C.M. has its particular task, its definite, limited, but indispensable and magnificent task! which is that of being, according to the beautiful definition of M. Raoul Allier, "a free school of free convictions." Our one ambition is to be faithful to that which God calls us to be.

### *Student Evangelism*

Our *missionary* activity in our Universities, which is our essential action, has in the last two years undergone quite new developments. You remember what an extraordinary event the first "Mission" in Paris, in January 1933, was. After some years of gropings, of isolated and sporadic efforts, we had organised a whole week of public lectures and discussions in the *Quartier Latin*, and this apparently insane enterprise was clothed by God with spirit and with power. Before the crowd which had come to us we were at once afraid and overcome, humbled and constrained to go on; we had at last recognised what we had still been doubting: the reality of the expectation of human souls. Some days afterwards we were at Strasbourg, and the whole Conference seemed lit up by the new enthusiasm of the Parisians. At once, several groups decided that they would have a Mission; and last winter saw the organisation of three efforts, almost identical in form (three days of lectures and of informal discussions), but differing considerably in spirit and in result. Each of them certainly bore fruit, the fruit of life and of salvation, because the Word of God, as Isaiah says, "does not return unto Him void." But if we have no desire to be ungrateful, we desire also to maintain an exacting clarity of vision. Now that distance permits us to characterise our efforts summarily, I shall say that the Strasbourg Mission was on the whole a failure, because it had been decided upon too quickly, and because, after a long time of doubt and lassitude, it was undertaken much more as an experiment than as a Mission. Two months afterwards, the Montpellier

Mission, prepared for by ardent and persevering prayer, appeared a powerful and profound effort, but the group fell flat immediately afterwards, perhaps because it had committed the error of expecting too much in the way of immediate and visible results. Later, the Lyons Mission, prepared with insufficient severity, attracted good audiences, but left them with their hunger. It was only a useful contact-making, and should have been restarted from the beginning of this winter onwards. At Paris, finally, a second Mission, consisting of four lectures and four discussions, was organised in the course of that memorable month of February 1934, and had in virtue of its composition a very striking character. That kind of "common front" of Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants, united by the great affirmations of the Faith, was a revelation for many students. But that Mission appeared to us a little too much like a second edition, and it did not renew the group in its inner life as that of the previous year had done.

From these facts of the winter of 1933-1934, one great lesson has become plain : that is, that we must at all costs avoid allowing Missions to become, for our big Associations, a new, habitual and stereotyped form of action. Each Mission must be original, as each Commandment of God is.

This winter, Paris and Montpellier have made new efforts. At Paris, a Mission of Continuation was organized, to give more advanced instruction in the faith to those who had already come to our first efforts. There was no allurements in the titles or in the names of speakers : those who came could come only to hear of Jesus Christ. And they came ! so that we were crushed in the smaller room which we had chosen... And the discussion became increasingly from evening to evening so true and so religious, that at the end we were unanimous in feeling obliged to continue as soon as possible...

At Montpellier, the group has just organised a Mission, not on three successive evenings, but on three successive Thursdays. "A three weeks' Mission", they told me. It is a big idea ; the intervals between the lectures may well have permitted of fruitful contacts. But it is too soon to draw any conclusion from that effort, which has just finished.

And our other groups ? "The Mission" hangs over them all as a question that has been put them. It is not lightly to be undertaken ; but neither is it indefinitely to be postponed. "But our fellow-students do not expect anything !", some of you have said to me. I do not believe it. And even if it were true, do you not believe that it is for you to awaken expectation in them ? And above all, have you asked yourselves if *God* does not expect something of you ?

*The Inner Life*

What are we now to say in conclusion regarding the *inner life* of our Associations ? The shock of that first Paris Mission, that question which remains put to us, has occasioned in nearly all our groups a kind of crisis, from which several have not yet emerged. That is the sign that our missionary responsibility, which is the very soul of the S.C.M., was really needing to be re-discovered, re-thought, accepted anew. That inner constraint has orientated the inner life of our groups in a double direction : on the one hand, towards common prayer, which has been made living for us because it was all directed towards a definite action ; and, by means of common prayer, towards a rediscovery of the Bible, felt and apprehended, not only, as we had too often regarded it, as the document of the Revelation, but as the living, acting Word of God. On the other hand, — and this kind of relation between the two is the right one, — we have set ourselves to study the most concrete questions : what does it mean to be a Christian ? How can one be a Christian in private, professional, public life ? What can be the meaning for us of such contemporary movements of thought or of faith as the theology of Karl Barth, the Oxford Groups, the Pentecostal Revival, the groups centring round the magazine *l'Esprit*, etc. ? Those are the subjects which have been most studied among us this winter. That which animates us is a deep need of truth, of reality, of immediate obedience ; the desire also to have true simplicity in our discussions, to place at the disposal of all the others the one thing by which we live, to know one another with a fully human knowledge which always goes beyond the merely human ; the desire for an authentic communion, in which we can receive and bring the "one thing needful." We desire to hear and to accept, at one and the same time, the call of the real men who are close to us, and the Sovereign Call of our God ; and to do in response nothing which does not compromise and involve us completely.

## BOOK REVIEWS

## A Study in Natural Theology

NATURE, MAN AND GOD : by William Temple, Archbishop of York ;  
*Macmillan, London.* 1934 ; 530 pp. 18/-.

This very impressive study in Natural Theology consists of two series of *Gifford Lectures*, delivered at Glasgow University during the Academic Years 1932-1933 and 1933-1934 ; and it increases one's gratitude to the Founder of the Lectureship.

Dr. Temple points out at the start that he deals with important philosophical issues as one whose mental habit is not that of a professional metaphysician, but that of one whose life has been devoted to the service of the Church. But the whole book gives evidence of a very wide knowledge especially of the English philosophical tradition, and is itself a noteworthy contribution to that tradition.

We say advisedly : the English tradition. For this is a very *English* book. Perhaps the greatest gap in the otherwise so imposing list of authorities quoted is the almost complete absence of any of the names which are today directing philosophical thought on the Continent of Europe (e.g. Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Grisebach), and the very inadequate treatment of the views of such theologians as are mentioned (Barth and Brunner). A recent controversy between the last two, on the very subject of Dr. Temple's lectures, was carried on in a world of thought to which his lectures would have been entirely foreign. But this lack, unfortunate though it be, is only one more illustration of the still more unfortunate situation in which all of us, along with Dr. Temple, are placed, *viz.* that of being heir to the results of the activities of the builders of the Tower of Babel !! And it must not be allowed to obscure from us the very great positive qualities of Dr. Temple's work.

The first half of the book is entitled : *The Transcendence of the Immanent*. After a general introduction on the distinction between Natural and Revealed Theology, which concludes that that distinction concerns method but not subject-matter, and on the tension between philosophy and religion, due to the fact that "the primary assurances of Religion are the ultimate questions of Philosophy", Dr. Temple exposes the Cartesian epistemological *faux-pas* ; discusses



the relation between mathematics, logic and history ; and passes on, with that background, to a consideration of the nature of the world as apprehended, particularly in respect of the three " absolute Values, " Truth, Beauty and Goodness, — of which only Goodness is truly absolute. A study of the relation of process, mind and value, and of the age-old question of freedom and determinism, leads him to the conclusion that " the note of authority present in all experience, " which makes us pay reverence to the immanent Values of Truth, Beauty and Goodness, is justifiable only if it be the claim upon us of a transcendent personal reality. " It is the transcendent Personality of God which gives their quality as awe-inspiring to the Values in which He is immanent and through which He is known."

The second half of the book goes on to deal with *The Immanence of the Transcendent*. The first chapter elaborates how the transcendent Personality reveals Himself through an immanent principle, Reason or *Logos*, which, as it expresses personality, is not a mere principle of constant action, but a principle of " infinitely delicate adjustment whereby a constant purpose may be fulfilled in varying circumstances. "

From this point the transition is natural to the question of Revelation and its mode. All occurrences are in some degree revelation of God ; but, as He is personal, particular revelations, " the coincidence of divinely-guided events and minds divinely illuminated to receive them, " are probable ; and the only fully adequate mode of Revelation is the life of a person.

After a discussion of the inter-relation of spiritual authority and religious experience, finitude and evil, Divine Grace and human freedom, there follows a treatment of the commonwealth of value, the meaning of history, and the moral and religious conditions of eternal life, which issues in the conviction that the nature of the Universe is *sacramental* ; that " spirit arises within and as part of an organism which is also material, and expresses its spirituality not by ignoring matter but by controlling it. " It is only in such a view that there is given " hope of making human both politics and economics and of making actual both faith and love."

Dr. Temple, precluded though he is by the Deed of Foundation from dealing with a specific Revelation in these lectures, yet concludes his study of Natural Religion and Natural Theology in the only appropriate way : " From these a man may learn that worship is the fulfilment of his being. . . because its essence is that the worshipper is drawn out of himself and wholly given to the Object of worship. But Natural Religion knows no object worthy of such worship, and Natural Theology cannot supply one. Thus

Natural Religion ends in a *hunger* for what would transform it into something other than itself — a specific Revelation. " So we end with the questioning of the whole creation, to which the only answer is Jesus Christ.

This indication of the scope and viewpoint of the book does no justice to its richness. Within its own presuppositions, it is a massive and very wise treatment of its subject. The only possible criticism would be one, not of the book itself but of its presuppositions : a radical task which goes beyond the scope of a review, even if the present reviewer had the desire, or were competent, to undertake it.

D. G. M. P.

## The Sovereignty of Jesus Christ

JESUS DER HERR: *die Führervollmacht Jesu und die Gottesoffenbarung in Christus*. Karl Heim: *Furche-Verlag, Berlin*, 1935 : 220 S. RM. 4.80. *In Leinen* RM. 6.—.

Pressure of time has prevented us from preparing an adequate appreciation of this work, which has been so eagerly awaited by the theological world. A fuller review will appear in our next issue. We wish immediately, however, to call the attention of our readers to its appearance. It follows upon Prof. Heim's previously-published volume of philosophical prolegomena : *Glaube und Denken: (Faith and Thought:)* as the second volume of his important tetralogy concerning THE EVANGELICAL FAITH AND PRESENT-DAY THOUGHT : *Characteristic features of a Christian view of life*.

D. G. M. P.



“ What does A do now ? ”

ETHICAL ISSUES CONFRONTING WORLD CHRISTIANS. Daniel Johnson Fleming. *International Missionary Council, New York and London, 1935.* 280 pp. Price \$2.00

In a recent number of the British magazine, *The Student Movement*, there is a letter written by Canon T. Tatlow, about his personal budget, which is worth reading because it shows how one Christian leader puts his religion into practice in the realm of spending money.

This book by Professor Fleming reminds one of that letter. It is just as practical, but covers a much wider range of problems, — such as the Christian's attitude towards his money, his State, other cultures and races than his own, — by means of illustrative stories which, besides being interesting in themselves, raise in an acute form the question : “ What does A do now ? ”, and which in every case have a direct bearing upon the missionary enterprise as well as upon personal practice.

This is among the best of the books which Prof. Fleming has written to drive Christians to think about what it means to be a Christian day by day ; and is deserving of careful study by groups of Student Volunteers and others interested in the missionary enterprise.

Any one who has sat in groups or committees with Prof. Fleming is impressed by the clarity of his thinking and the eagerness with which he learns from all kinds of people. That is the mark of a great soul. But there is also a time for a man of Prof. Fleming's experience to speak out his own mind. This book would win more readers among students if there were an introductory chapter, in which the author laid down his own deepest convictions, stating where he stands on some of the issues raised later on. Modern students are eager to know what a man believes, and why he believes it, before they begin to discuss questions of conduct.

E. F. C.



## Notes on Contributors and Articles

JOHN R. COATES, a former Secretary of the S.C.M. of Great Britain and Ireland, is now Professor of Old Testament Literature at the Selly Oak Colleges. He is the author of *Men of Destiny*, *The Coming of the Church* and other books, and a much-appreciated speaker at Conferences of the British Movement and of the Federation.

The Article by W. A. VISSER 'T HOOFT reproduces an address to students given during a recent "Mission" in the Quartier Latin of Paris.

The Extract from SÖREN KIERKEGAARD has been translated from the German by DENZIL G. M. PATRICK, who has also contributed the introductory note.

PIERRE MAURY, a former Secretary of the W.S.C.F., is now Pastor at Passy (Paris). He is Editor of *Foi et Vie*, and the author of *Trois Histoires Spirituelles*. This is the third of the "International Dialogues" which he has contributed to *The Student World*. The others appeared in the First Quarter Issue of 1933 and the Second Quarter Issue of 1934.

FRANCIS P. MILLER is Chairman of the W.S.C.F., and Secretary of the Foreign Policy Association in the U.S.A. His article is based on an address delivered at a meeting of Younger Christian Thinkers in the U.S.A.

JULIUS SCHNIEWIND is Professor of New Testament at Kiel in Germany, and a member of the Leaders' Council of the German S.C.M. He is the author of a Commentary on the Gospel of Mark (in the series *Das Neue Testament Deutsch*) and a contributor to Gerhard Kittel's *Theological Dictionary to the New Testament*.

The Book-reviews are by Denzil G. M. Patrick, Theological Secretary of the S.C.M. of Great Britain and Ireland, and by E. Fay Campbell, Secretary of the Yale branch of the American S.C.M.

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In view of the very great interest which has been aroused by the *International Student Conference on Missions*, to be held at Basle from August 31 to September 5 this year, it has been decided to devote the next issue of *The Student World* to this important gathering. The issue will contain a number of the outstanding addresses given at the Conference, as well as impressions of the Conference as a whole.

The issue on *Students, Workers, Villagers* will appear at the beginning of the New Year.